

Date of issue: Friday, 8 December 2023

MEETING:	CABINET	
	Councillor Smith	Leader of the Council – Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures
	Councillor Chahal	Deputy Leader of the Council – Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits
	Councillor I. Ahmed	Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning
	Councillor Bedi	Education and Children’s Services
	Councillor Kelly	Highways, Housing and Transport
	Councillor Manku	Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces
	Councillor Muvvala	Customer Service, Resident Engagement, Digital, Data & Technology
	Councillor Wright	Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities
DATE AND TIME:	MONDAY, 18TH DECEMBER, 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>
	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 20th November 2023	1 - 10	-
3.	Budget Management Quarter 2 2023/24	11 - 38	All
4.	General Fund Revenue Budget 2024-25, and Medium Term Financial Strategy 24/25 to 27/28	39 - 72	All
5.	Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28	73 - 134	All
6.	Services to support those experiencing domestic abuse	135 - 168	All
7.	Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)	169 - 196	All
8.	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update	197 - 256	All
9.	Housing Resident Involvement Strategy	257 - 284	All
10.	Options Appraisal re Procurement of the repairs maintenance and investment (RMI) Contract	285 - 324	All
11.	Procurement of Replacement Fleet Vehicles	325 - 336	All
12.	Estate Strategy – Phase 1	To	All
13.	References from Scrutiny	Follow If any	All

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.

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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, 20th November, 2023.

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

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor I. Ahmed and Muvvala

PART 1

52. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

53. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th October 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

54. Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26, including an Older People Strategy Action Plan.

The aim of the strategy was to ensure that Slough was a place where older people lived long and purposeful lives, experienced good health and achieved a desired quality of life. The strategy sought to minimise the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness and aimed to prevent or delay, where possible, a range of long term conditions such as dementia. The Cabinet would receive reports back on an annual basis on the progress being made in delivering the action plan and on any proposed changes to the strategy.

Lead Members commented on various aspects of the report and welcomed the engagement that had taken place with partners and particularly with older people, including through the Co-Production Network. Resident engagement was a priority for the administration and the good practice in producing this plan should be taken forward in the development of future strategies. It was agreed that the strategy could make an important contribution to addressing the needs of people living in the large number of multi-generational households in Slough.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet expressed its strong support for the strategy; thanked those that had contributed to its development; and agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26 as set out at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

- (b) That it be noted that a report would be brought back to Cabinet annually setting out the progress against the Action Plan and recommending any amendments to the Strategy.

55. Contract Award for the Supply and Installation of Stairlifts

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval to award a contract for the supply and installation of stairlifts.

The Cabinet had approved a new Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) in November 2022, which followed an upheld complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) regarding the provision of a stairlift. The HAP detailed the Disabled Facilities Grant options that an individual could receive and the policy fast-tracked certain types of equipment such as stairlifts.

The contract would be for a period of three years plus two optional extensions of one year each, subject to satisfactory performance. This would be via direct award to Handicare Accessibility Limited through the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework Agreement and would commence in January 2024. The contract would be funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant with a total contract value of up to £1m over the potential 5-year contract term. The proposal to have a sole provider to supply and install stairlifts to improve the service and decrease waiting times would therefore ensure compliance with the key actions to address the LGSCO public interest report.

The Cabinet agreed with the proposed approach and particularly welcomed the anticipated reduction in waiting times for eligible residents from 18 months to potentially as little as 30 days. Lead Members discussed issues such as value for money and performance monitoring and were satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place. The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the award of the contract to Handicare Accessibility Limited for the supply and installation of stairlifts funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for a period of three years plus two optional extensions of one year, subject to satisfactory performance through the ESPO Framework be approved. The total value of this contract would be up to £1M over the potential 5-year contract term.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for People (Adults) in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Lead Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing to enter into the contract with Handicare Accessibility Limited.

56. Children & Young People's Placements Sufficiency Strategy

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report on the Children & Young People's Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

The Council had a duty to ensure that its children in care had suitable accommodation within the local authority's area that met the needs of children. The strategy proposed at Appendix 1 to the report set out how the Council would seek to meet this duty. It was noted that there had been a rise across the country in the number of children being looked after and it was therefore a challenge to provide the sufficiency of accommodation required. Slough also faced significant pressure from the placement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and the resulting increase in care experienced young people who were entitled to support.

The Executive Director, People (Children)/Slough Children First Chief Executive highlighted that the priority was to ensure that all children were provided with a safe and loving home and to keep children as close to the local community as possible. The strategy had identified five key areas including strengthening early help and 'edge of care' support, and fostering recruitment and retention. A Sufficiency Board would be set up to oversee the delivery of the strategy. One of the longer term options was to scope the potential of creating SBC/SCFs own internal residential home for children. Lead Members expressed support for the concept but asked questions about whether such a proposal was viable in the Council's financial circumstances. It was responded that the first step would be a feasibility study and the provision of such a facility would have to be cost effective.

The Cabinet highlighted its commitment to the wellbeing of children in Slough and welcomed the contribution the strategy could play in achieving that aim. Discussion included what more could be done to recruit foster carers and make Slough a 'foster friendly authority'. At the conclusion of the discussion the strategy was approved.

Resolved – That the Children & Young People's Placement Sufficiency Strategy as at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

57. Children & Young People's Participation Strategy

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report that sought approval of the Children & Young People's Participation Strategy.

The aim of the strategy was to ensure that Slough was a place where children felt they could voice their views and opinions in a safe and supported environment. It had been developed between the Council and partner agencies and would be delivered through a range of initiatives supported by a multi-agency action plan.

It was noted that the inspection of children's services by Ofsted in January 2023 identified that children and young people were not involved in the

design, delivery or shaping of services or in their own care planning. This was therefore a key area for improvement. The Council had prioritised children and young people in the new corporate plan and recognised that services should be co-produced with them.

The Leader emphasised that the administration wanted to listen to the views of children and young people and the strategy was an important step in the right direction. The Cabinet approved the strategy.

Resolved – That the Children & Young People’s Participation Strategy as at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

58. Development of Integrated Family Hubs in existing children's centres

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report on the family hub model to support families from conception to the age of 19, or 25 for young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

The report followed the decision of Cabinet in May 2023 to consolidate children’s centres with wider functions in three centres (Penn Road, Romsey Close and Chalvey Grove) and early years education only in the other two retained centres (Yew Tree Road and Monksfield Way). The family hub model would provide a single point of access to integrated family support services for early help. They would build on the legacy of Slough’s established children’s centres and further strengthen outcomes for children and young people which could help reduce longer term dependency on statutory services. The model was aligned with emerging national approach to children’s social care with services shifting into local community-based multi-disciplinary teams.

Lead Members welcomed the development of the model to strengthen engagement and working with families most in need of support. Questions were asked about cost and how effectiveness would be measured. The Executive Director, People (Children) highlighted that the report set out the principles and approach for the family hub model and that it would be delivered within the best value ethos. Future decisions on provision would come back to Cabinet and clearly set out the costs at that stage.

After due consideration the recommendation was approved.

Resolved – That the establishment of a Family Hub model of delivery from the Council's retained children's centres at Penn Road, Romsey Close and Chalvey Grove Children’s Centres be approved.

59. A4 Safer Roads

The Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services, Highways, Housing & Transport introduced a report that sought approval to introduce road safety improvements on the A4 from the Huntercombe crossroads to the

intersection of the M4 Junction 5 roundabout. The works were fully funded from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Safer Roads Fund grant.

The purpose of the funding for the scheme was to reduce the number of fatal and serious injuries for all road users on the A4. The DfT funding had been made available to upgrade 50 of England's most dangerous local A-road section following an analysis by the Road Safety Foundation in 2016. Funding of £1.7m had been made available for the A4 in Slough given its high risk profile. The road safety measures to be introduced included a 30 mph speed limit along appropriate sections of the A4, as had been approved by Cabinet in December 2022; the introduction of average speed cameras; red-light camera systems; road surface treatments; improved pedestrian and cycle crossings; removing roadside hazards; and decluttering. The proposals were aligned to the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 and Corporate Plan objectives.

Lead Members considered the safety data and the consultation responses detailed in the report. The Cabinet sought assurance that the data that would be used in the review that would be carried out after the scheme was completed would include a comparison against the 2016 baseline as well as the data collected in 2021 which would have been effected by the Covid related impact on travel patterns. This was agreed. The links to the A4 Cycle Way scheme were considered and Members agreed that it was appropriate to deliver in a cost effective way and reduce any disruption during construction. In response to concerns raised by the Cabinet about potential disruption the Executive Director responsible for transport gave assurance that the majority of works were off carriageway and would be phased and coordinated to minimise disruption.

The Cabinet agreed that the key priority was for the A4 to be as safe as possible and that scheme would help to achieve this. The importance of minimising disruption for road users during construction was emphasised. The recommendations were then agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the implementation of the road safety measures outlined in the report as part of the Safer Roads Fund scheme on the A4 be approved;
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services, to approve the revised road safety Summary of Countermeasures identified in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) That the procurement for services and construction associated with the Summary of Countermeasures in Appendix 2 to the report be approved; and

- (d) That the allocation of grant funds for the installation of speed enforcement cameras on the A4 to Thames Valley Police be approved.

60. ICT & Digital Update

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that updated on the progress of the ICT & Digital modernisation and remediation work approved by Cabinet in March 2022. The report set out the work to-date, changes to the portfolio of projects based on the learning of the past year and the plan for the next year.

It was noted that the update had been considered by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 24th October 2023 at which various aspects of the progress were tested and constructively challenged. Overall it was noted that good progress had been made, particularly in building solid foundations which would lead to new technology delivering improvements for residents in the future.

One major project that had been successfully completed recently was the data centre move. This was a significant project and the IT team had worked very long hours over the weekend to complete it to ensure services and staff were not disrupted. The Cabinet thanked the IT team for their hard work to ensure the move went smoothly.

The Chief Digital & Information Officer summarised other areas of progress set out in the report, which would in time improve customer service and the customer experience when engaging with the Council. The update and next steps were noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the update to the modernisation and remediation activities being undertaken by the ICT & Digital Team and the next phase of work, as well as the ongoing risks, issues and challenges as the work continues be noted; and
- (b) That the next steps as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved, including the adoption of more automated processes, the upskilling of staff in the use of modern technologies and the building of a more coherent digital offer for residents.

61. Public Sector Equality Duty and Slough Borough Council Equality Objectives

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that set out the proposed 2023-2027 statutory equality objectives for the Council in line with the public sector equality duty. The objectives covered both employment and service provision.

The Council was fully committed to promoting equality in the provision of its services to Slough resident and as an employer to its workforce. The report

set out the current position and progress made in compliance with the provisions under the Equality Act. The Council had been working closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission who were advising a number of local authorities on their work to achieve full compliance. The draft equality objectives would be subject to consultation and come back to Cabinet, and then Council, in early 2024 to approve.

The report had been considered by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 24th October 2023 and the comments and recommendations were contained in Appendix 3 to the report. The officer responses to the recommendations were set out in paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10 of the report, which were noted. The relevant points would be taken into account when a report was brought back to Cabinet to approve the final objectives following consultation.

After due consideration the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft equality objectives attached at Appendix A to the report be approved for the purposes of consultation.
- (b) That it be agreed that a report would be brought back to Cabinet with a view to final objectives being approved by Cabinet and Full Council early in 2024.
- (c) That it be noted that the report was presented to Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee on 24 October and a letter from the Chair had been sent to the Leader including additional recommendations for consideration by Cabinet (Appendix C to the report).

62. Procurement of Temporary Labour Contract

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that sought approval to award the temporary labour contract for the supply of temporary workers to the Council following a competitive procurement process through a framework agreement. The current contract would expire in March 2024 and a replacement was required.

The proposed contract was for two years with optional extensions of a further two years subject to satisfactory performance. The Part II appendix included details of the provider and was noted in Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The Council was currently operating at a spend for temporary workers at £21.9 million for 2022-2023. The majority of the spend was for agency workers covering vacant established posts, of which £16 million was in salaries and £1.85 million were attributed to agency and provider oncosts. There was also spend on additional agency workers where there was specific

project or skills need where the Council did not have permanent staff who could undertake this work. It was recognised that there would be a continued need for temporary workers but the Leader reiterated the administrations aim to reduce reliance on such provision. The Cabinet asked about cost savings and it was noted that whilst savings of £767k had been negotiated with the current vendor in 2022-2023, there was still an opportunity to negotiate greater cost savings through the new contract.

The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be agreed to the award of the contract to Supplier 1 as set out in Appendix 1 for the supply of the Council's temporary labour needs for a period of up to four years (two-year contract plus optional extensions of up to 2 further years subject to satisfactory performance) from 25th March 2024 – 24th March 2028.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director – Strategy and Improvement in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and the section 151 officer, to complete the final negotiations and enter into contract with Supplier 1 for the supply of the Council's temporary labour needs for a period of up to four years.

63. Disposal of Site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley

The Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits introduced a report that sought approval for the disposal of the former Merry Makers public house site in Langley.

The Part II appendix contained details of the bidder and this was considered by Cabinet during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The proposed sale had been subject to an open competitive disposal process and reflected best consideration reasonably obtainable for the disposal of the assets in accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The sale would generate capital receipts which will, as the asset sits within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA); benefit the HRA. The Lead Member commented that there had been previous aspirations for a health facility on the site, but there had been no appetite from the NHS for this and the site had originally been acquired by the Council for housing. The site was currently empty with associated risk of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour.

After due consideration the disposal was agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council sale of the site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley with the bidder named in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to negotiate the terms of and enter into the contract and any associated documentation in connection with the disposal consistent with the disposal report and Heads of Terms appended at Confidential Appendix 1.

64. References from Scrutiny

The comments of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) on the Public Sector Equality Duty and SBC Equality Objectives were considered during discussion of that item. It was also noted that the ICT & Digital Update report had been scrutinised by CISC on 24th October 2023.

There were no other references from scrutiny.

65. Exclusion of Press and Public

All business was conducted in public during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information contained in the Part II appendices. Therefore, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

66. Contract Award for the Supply and Installation of Stairlifts - Appendix 2

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

67. Procurement of Temporary Labour Contract - Appendix 1

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

68. Disposal of Site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley - Appendix

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.31 pm and closed at 7.48 pm)

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Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 December 2023
SUBJECT:	Budget Management Quarter 2
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Chahal – Lead Member Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue and Benefits
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
KEY DECISION:	NO
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	NO
APPENDICES:	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

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 second quarter, September 30 2023.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to **note** the following.

- The Council's forecast overspend at the end of Quarter 2 is £8.2m, up considerably from £5.3m at the end of Quarter 1. The risk is therefore high that without significant reductions in spend over the remainder of the financial year, the Council will be unable to balance its budget within the Capitalisation Direction.*

2. *Service revenue budgets are forecast to overspend by £15.6m in 2023/24. There are Corporate underspends in respect of interest costs and receipts (£5.7m) and the Corporate Contingency budget (£5.4m) totalling £11.1m. However, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is showing an overspend of £3.7m. Service and Corporate budgets combined are showing an overspend of £8.2m.*
3. *If drastic reductions are not made in the remainder of the financial year, the Council will be unable to balance its budget within the current capitalisation direction.*
4. *Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings (MTFS) of £20.5m are expected to be delivered in 2023/24 against planned savings of £22.4m.*
5. *That the Capital programme is forecast to underspend in 2023/24 by £25.5m. Requests for slippage would require separate authorisation and are assumed here for the sake of clarity. A formal request for approval will form part of the Q3 Budget Management report to Cabinet in February.*

Reasons for Recommendations

The Council's quarter two budget monitoring is indicating a significant worsening of the in-year overspends, with a lack of evidence of effective mitigations to ensure the 2023/24 budget will balance within the capitalisation direction. It remains challenging to present reliable financial information due to the delays in closure of previous years' accounts, poor record keeping and the accounting system not being fully utilised. The figures in the report are the best that can be produced at this point in time, and further work may lead to changes in these figures. Cabinet is responsible for ensuring that the vision and objectives it is setting can be delivered within the Council's budget and policy framework and all lead members have a key responsibility in working with officers to identify options to mitigate budgetary pressures.

Commissioner Review

The external environment is challenging with financial pressures in several Council services. This is further compounded by inherent risks in the corporate funds which hold the Council's assets such as property, reserves and the debts that the Council has carried forward from previous years.

Urgent action is required to identify any remaining issues and the Council should take all reasonable actions and necessary steps to minimise the risk to which it is exposed, implement corrective action to mitigate pressures, deliver agreed savings and efficiencies to address the in-year deficit outlined in this report.

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 limits.
- 2.3 Virements approved by Cabinet following the Quarter 1 Budget Management report mean that the General Fund revenue budget is now £151.1m, which reflects a change in the accounting treatment of the Social Care Grant. The forecasts in this report are against those cash limited budgets.
- 2.4 The Quarter 2 forecast for 2023/24 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 but the external audit is now delayed because nationally there is a review of audit backlogs across the country, and Grant Thornton are awaiting the outcome of that before starting any new audits
 - 2020/21 Accounts partially prepared but yet to be fully completed, in light of 2019/20 waiting audit.
 - 2021/22 Accounts to be completed.
 - 2022/23 Accounts to be completed.
 - 2023/24 budget delivery/forecast.
 - 2024/25 - 2028/29 MTFS is actively being worked on, with the draft budget proposals also on today's Cabinet agenda.
- 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 Quarter 2 forecast for 2023/24 is indicating that:
- Service budgets are forecast to overspend by £15.6m. This is a worsening (£1.7m) of the position from Quarter 1's forecast, which was £13.9m after adjusting for the virements approved as part of that report.
 - Corporate budgets are forecast to underspend by £7.4m. This is a £1.2m unfavourable movement from the Quarter 1 forecast, which had an underspend of £8.6m. There has been a significant unfavourable movement on Minimum Revenue Provision, from a £1.2m underspend to a £3.7m overspend driven by a

review of the application of capital receipts in 2022/23 and previous years. This has been mitigated by significant favourable movement on net interest costs of £3.8m, being interest earned on investments increasing by £3.4m and interest payments reducing by £0.4m. The interest on investments is interest from Council owned companies not previously accounted for, and a significant proportion is for prior years, meaning much of this is one-off in nature.

- There remains inconsistency between reporting that savings are being delivered and a significant forecast overspend. At this stage of the monitoring forecast is inevitably more robust than earlier in the year so this might suggest that the savings delivery statements are 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 have helped in reducing the increase in the forecast overspend.
- The Housing Revenue Account is forecasting a surplus of £0.8m for the year.
- The Dedicated Schools Grant is forecasting a carry forward deficit of £11.0m at the end of year inclusive of Safety Valve funding.
- The Capital Programme (General Fund) is showing an underspend of £25.5m against a budget of £40.3m, of which £22.5m is due to slippage on timescales where the budget will need to be rolled forward into next year, £1.1m is identified as savings, and £1.7m of Department of Transport grant funded activities (covering routine maintenance including draining, traffic signals, streetlighting, and car park maintenance) have been reclassified as revenue, for both the expenditure and the income.
- The Capital Programme (HRA) is showing a minor overspend of £147k against a budget of £11.4m.
- 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. Further work is required to ensure that any financial commitments and risks are built upon robust assumptions.

3 GENERAL FUND

- 3.1 There is a forecast overspend at the end of Quarter 2 of £8.2m. The approved budget for 2023/24 was balanced by a Capitalisation Direction of £31.6m. This requires the Council to sell assets and use £31.6m of the proceeds to bridge the gap between the Council's spending plans and its sources of funding. The Capitalisation Direction requirement for 23/24 was submitted to DLUHC in February.

- 3.2 The forecast overspend would increase the Capitalisation Direction requirement from £31.6m to £39.8m and would require DLUHC approval. It also relies on there being sufficient capital receipts to cover the requirement. Neither of these can be assumed. The seriousness of the current financial situation as outlined in this report cannot be overstated.
- 3.3 The predominant theme with both the overspend in absolute terms, and its worsening, is in respect of demand levels in People (Adults) and Homelessness. In both areas there are acknowledged concerns about the quality and timeliness of data held in prime systems. In Adult Social Care some of the worsening position is due to expenditure relating to previous years, which came to light in September. The delay in processing of expenditure has increased the requirement to undertake a full detailed analysis of historical expenditure for the coming monitoring periods (months 7 and 8), with the risk that further material pressures may be released.
- 3.4 Unrealised income targets are also of note in several areas, most notably within Adult Social Care, where Client Contributions are £1.7m below budget, and in Housing in respect of recharges to the HRA, also amounting to £1.7m.

Table 1 – General Fund Forecast

Service Budgets	2022-23	2023-24			Previous Variance Adjusted
	Draft Outturn	Current Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
People (Adults)	34,538	27,822	36,866	9,044	7,820
People (Children)	7,972	8,177	7,482	(695)	(1,085)
Slough Children First	34,289	40,514	40,514	0	0
Place & Community	15,868	14,940	15,331	390	1,576
Housing, Property & Planning	7,725	3,547	8,283	4,736	3,986
Strategy & Improvement	14,889	11,745	12,200	455	104
Monitoring Officer	1,945	1,839	1,764	(75)	(186)
Finance & Commercial (S151)	8,112	5,308	7,101	1,793	1,665
Total Service Budgets	125,339	113,893	129,541	15,648	13,880
Corporate Budgets					
Other Corporate Budgets	16,572	12,299	6,851	(5,448)	(5,449)
Pension Deficit	4,914	5,014	5,014	0	0
Minimum Revenue Provision	17,700	13,393	17,127	3,734	(1,246)
Capital Financing	4,156	6,539	842	(5,696)	(1,891)
Total Corporate Budgets	43,341	37,244	29,834	(7,410)	(8,585)
Total Expenditure	168,680	151,137	159,375	8,238	5,294
Financing					
Council Tax	(69,179)	(72,995)	(72,995)	0	0
Business Rates	(40,168)	(30,591)	(30,591)	0	0
Collection Fund Deficit	10,611	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,451)	(7,302)	(7,302)	0	0
Other Government Grants	(4,291)	(8,674)	(8,674)	0	0
Total Financing	(109,478)	(119,562)	(119,562)	0	0
Capitalisation Direction	(59,202)	(31,575)	(39,813)	(8,238)	(5,294)
Total Funds	(168,680)	(151,137)	(159,375)	(8,238)	(5,294)
Total	0	0	0	0	0

NB - Previous Adjusted Variance is Q1 variance adjusted for Q1 virements

- 3.5 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. These are funded from the Better Care Fund, and Hospital Discharge grant, but the costs exceed the funding available.
- 3.6 There are some mitigations within the overall Adults position arising from additional income arising from grants (£1.3m), including in-year allocations from the Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund, Urgent & Emergency Care Support Fund, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant, and Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 3.7 There are underspends in Children's services in Children Management, and School Effectiveness, as well as on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The underspends are in areas where vacancies have been held pending restructures, conversely the overspends are in areas where vacancies cannot be held open, and it has been necessary to employ interims. There is also an underspend on Home to School Transport with a reduction in the number of transport plans not considered statutory.
- 3.8 The Children's company (SCF) is now forecasting a balanced position following the approval of a virement to cover the increased cost of their business plan (£4.4m).
- 3.9 Within Place and Communities, there has been work on reducing costs as well as some one-off gains from income, for example releasing into the accounts accumulated parking income from car parks from previous years held in the general fund (£0.5m) and additional income in Environmental Services of £0.4m in the last period has helped reduce the previous overspend from £1.6m to £0.4m. The parking income is not part of the Surplus Parking Account which relates to on street parking. Other significant favourable variances include the fees for Leisure. The main pressure in this area arises from unachievable internal recharge income targets.
- 3.10 Within Housing, Planning & Property, most service areas are now forecasting to balance, having previously forecast overspends amounting to c £1m. These changes have been through a mixture of achieving extra income and vacancy management. There is also a one off gain from having over accrued for outstanding energy costs in 22/23.
- 3.11 However, the significant financial pressures in the Temporary Accommodation service have worsened, with a £4.7m overspend now forecast, up from £2.9m forecast in Quarter 1. Extensive work is ongoing in this area, both on challenging costs (primarily the high level of rents paid to landlords) and maximising income, as well as checking that claims from landlords are valid. A full report from the Director of Housing is expected to go to Cabinet in December on this.
- 3.12 The most significant element of the pressure in this area is due to the very high costs of placing homeless clients in B&Bs or hotels and private landlord properties. These costs are far higher than the rent recovered via Housing Benefit at local housing allowance (LHA) rates. A number of measures, covering the immediate

and short to medium term, are being identified and put in place to ensure placements are made to suitable but cheaper accommodation at rates at or below current LHA rates.

- 3.13 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. The main changes since the last report are a decision to extend the additional staff at the contact centre to the end of the financial year (£90k), and a revised estimate of the cost of refreshing laptops (£150k).
- 3.14 Within Finance the most significant pressure is from staff costs due to the number of interim staff across the Finance service. Recruitment for these posts is active, and in fact the two Director posts and service Strategic Finance Manager posts have now all been permanently recruited to. However, a large number of interims still remain, and the experience of Slough having complete turnover of Finance staff twice since the 114 was announced has led to a decision to ensure there are adequate transitional arrangements with handover in place. Options are being considered to reduce this forecast in year.
- 3.15 Corporate Budgets show an underspend of £5.4m on the Contingency budget. Some of the contingency budget does remain to be allocated, for example once the pay award is known, and the balance will offset overspends showing elsewhere.
- 3.16 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 £5.3m is partly 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. In addition, there is a favourable variance on interest receipts from loans to Council owned companies of £3.4m. Of this, £0.8m is on-going, and the balance is one-off being related to previous financial years.
- 3.17 A review of the application of capital receipts in previous years and asset sales in 2022/23 in particular in respect of whether assets are designated as HRA assets, financing debt or the or the revenue accounts. This led to a requirement to recalculate the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) budget which is now showing an overspend of £3.7m. This is an unfavourable movement of £5.0m since the last report when an underspend of £1.2m was reported (minor difference due to rounding).
- 3.18 The summary for savings is shown in the next table

The table shows that some savings have already been delivered, and there is confidence that a significant proportion will be delivered during the year. There are some risks of non-delivery with a small number of savings now considered:

- Within People (Adults) the £250k saving in respect of the Council wide exercise on integration is considered undeliverable within the financial year
- Within Place the full saving from charging for green waste is not considered achievable, with perhaps £275k unlikely to be delivered

- As previously reported, the vacancy factor in Finance and Commercial is considered undeliverable. With finance reliant on interims at present there is in fact an overspend against budget and this saving cannot be achieved this year.
- The largest saving variation is in Corporate Budgets covering Support Services Strategic Commissioning, and Fees and Charges. The savings were held against Contingency which also contained an allowance for non-delivery of savings of £3m. As non delivery of savings is better than allowed for in the budget this reflects a contribution to the Corporate Contingency underspend.

Table 2 – MTFs Savings Delivery

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	2,324	1,409	1,772	250	250	5,754	66
People (Children)	805	480	115	0	0	105	700	-105
Slough Children First	0						0	0
Place & Community	3,700	3,305	325	200	275	0	3,830	130
Housing, Property & Planning	750	50	550	150	0	0	750	0
Strategy & Improvement	1,823	818	1,005	0	0	0	1,823	0
Finance & Commercial (\$151)	7,506	1,073	4,634	1,400	399	0	7,107	-399
	20,272	8,050	8,038	3,522	924	355	19,964	-308
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	8,050	8,171	3,890	924	392	20,501	-1,921

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 £1.6m, £0.8m in excess of the budget. The surplus will be transferred to HRA General reserve at the end of the financial year.

Table 3 – HRA Forecast

Description	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
Total HRA Expenditure	40,356	38,962	(1,394)
Total HRA Income	(41,155)	(40,597)	558
(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	(800)	(1,635)	(836)

4.4 Key areas of variance include –

- Repairs & Maintenance Services - net underspend of (£0.667m), arising from lower than expected costs for Asbestos Management, contractor costs at Hawker House and Void repairs. The underspend is partially offset by an overspend with Electrical Installations.
- Neighbourhood Services - Net overspend of £0.173m, arising from higher than expected Council Tax charges on void properties and staffing costs. The introduction of the new NEC Housing Management System continues to be challenging and have resulted in delays, albeit improving, to the void turn around processes. These will be fully offset by projected underspend elsewhere.
- Central Support Recharges - Underspend of (£1.483m), arising from partial release of over budget to offset pressures elsewhere. Work to re-align the Recharges budgets is in progress.
- Estate Services - Net overspend of £0.236m, arising from higher than expected expenditure for DSO grounds maintenance and building cleaning. These will be fully offset by projected overspend elsewhere.
- Other Services - Net overspend of £0.348m, arising from unbudgeted NEC project team costs, computer licences £and business rates. These will be fully offset by underspend elsewhere.
- Rents & Service Charges – Overall under-recovery of £0.557m arising from Service charges, Shops, and Garages due to income loss from voids and lower than expected Land rent. These losses will be fully offset by projected 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 cumulative provisional DSG deficit at the end of 2022-23 was £14.7m. A surplus of £0.6m is currently forecast for 2023-24. When our second DSG Safety Valve payment is made this will give a forecast cumulative deficit of £10.9m by 31 March 2024.

Table 4 DSG

<i>All in £million</i>	Schools	High Needs	Early Years	Central Services	Total Deficit	Cumulative Deficit
2017-18					4.9	
2018-19	(0.1)	2.7	(0.5)	0.0	2.1	7.0
2019-20	(0.1)	5.9	0.4	0.0	6.2	13.2
2020-21	0.6	6.6	0.1	0.0	7.3	20.5
2021-22	(0.1)	4.8	0.3	0.0	5.0	25.5
DSG Management Plan Deficit					(10.8)	14.7
Write-off 2022-23						
2022-23	0.0	0.4	(0.7)	0.4	0.1	14.8
P6 2023-24 F/C	(0.3)	(0.2)	(0.1)	0.0	(0.6)	14.2
DSG Management Plan Deficit					(3.2)	11.0
Write-off 2023-24						

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 a further £54.8m in 23/24 (gross; the net figure is £53.4m). Of the £54.8m £5.9m is forecast as attributable to the HRA (£5.7m net). At the time of the Quarter 1 Budget Management report the projection was £116m of asset sales this year. The reasons for the change are outlined below.

6.2 A complication has been identified in relation to the disposals and pipeline of disposables in that some of them are designated as belonging to the HRA. Further work has been undertaken to determine the impact of this situation in respect of both past and future disposals, and HRA disposals have been removed from the forecast until further clarity has been made on appropriation. This has impacted on the calculation of the MRP (para 3.17 above)

6.3 A number of bids have been received for individual assets that are either below financial breakeven given the income those assets earn, or are below what is deemed an acceptable price. The fixed asset register is now being revalued, with priority given to assets due for disposal, as there is a concern that some of the current valuations on the balance sheet may not be correct.

6.3 A total of 16 asset sales have completed to the end of September, equating to £22.2m in capital receipts to date, offset by £0.6m costs relating to the sales. The

auction in September performed well with all lots exceeding the guide prices; the income from these will be fully reflected over the next couple of months following completion.

- 6.4 Work is ongoing to update the Estate Strategy to identify further disposal opportunities and to help clarify the size of the retained portfolio, moving forward. The initial Stakeholder Engagement exercise is complete, and an emerging conceptual hypothesis is being tested.

7 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The General Fund capital budget in 2023/24 is £40.27m following approval of slippage requests of £3.95m at September Cabinet.
- 7.2 The budget is forecasting an underspend of £25.5m for 2023/24. This compares to £17.23m in period 3. The main change is due to delays in projects that will require funding to be slipped to 24/25.
- 7.3 Of the £25.50m, £22.5m is due to delayed starts on various projects and the budget will need to be slipped to future years, £1.13m is savings, £0.2m is unspent grant returnable to the funder and £1.67m is reclassified revenue expenditure.
- 7.4 For slippage the main items are £9.67m for the A4 Cycle Lane project, with preliminary designs only submitted to Cabinet in July; this project will continue into 2024/25, £2.67m 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, and £2.47m related to Destination Farnham Road due to delayed start of the project.
- 7.5 Previously identified savings related to Nova House (£4.6m) may be needed in 24/25 so has also been added to the slippage. GRE5 are currently applying for funding from Homes England, with a decision expected in February 2024. If grant funding is awarded then GRE5 will not need to draw on their loan agreement with the Council, which would then be a saving to the Council. At this stage it is considered prudent to slip the budget rather than offer up as a saving, until the funding decision is made.
- 7.6 There have been savings identified of £1.13m mainly from the Hub Development (£1.0m) which was duplicated in the budget.
- 7.7 The Capital HRA budget in 2023/24 is £11.36m following approval of slippage requests of £1.267m.
- 7.8 The budget is forecasting an overspend of £0.147m which will be funded from capital receipt of the sale of Tower and Ashbourne.
- 7.9 Table 5 summarises the financial position for capital expenditure

Table 5: Capital Programme

CAPITAL	Current Budget	Approved Slippage	Revised Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund:						0
Adults	1,169	476	1,645	324	1,413	(232)
Children Services	4,323	100	4,423	205	1,756	(2,667)
Housing, Property & Planning	8,479	520	8,999	374	2,198	(6,801)
Place & Communities	22,346	2,859	25,205	1,586	9,252	(15,953)
GF Total	36,317	3,955	40,272	2,489	14,619	(25,653)
Housing Revenue Account:						
RMI Capital Programme	6,154	1,022	7,176	1,844	7,277	101
Planned Maintenance Capital	3,139	245	3,384	560	3,222	(162)
Affordable Homes	800	0	800	188	1,008	208
HRA total	10,093	1,267	11,360	2,592	11,507	147
CAPITAL Total	46,410	5,222	51,632	5,081	26,126	(25,506)

8 FUNDING

- 8.1 The table below shows the Financing side of the budget; the bottom line shows the Capitalisation Direction, which shows an original budget of £31.6m for the year. The forecast overspend is financed from an increase in the Capitalisation Direction, and it therefore shows a forecast £39.8m

Service Budgets	2022-23	2023-24			Previous Variance Adjusted £'000
	Draft Outturn £'000	Current Budget £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	
Financing					
Council Tax	(69,179)	(72,995)	(72,995)	0	0
Business Rates	(40,168)	(30,591)	(30,591)	0	0
Collection Fund Deficit	10,611	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,451)	(7,302)	(7,302)	0	0
Other Government Grant	(4,291)	(8,674)	(8,674)	0	0
Total Financing	(109,478)	(119,562)	(119,562)	0	0
Capitalisation Direction	(59,202)	(31,575)	(39,813)	(8,238)	(5,294)

- 8.2 The Capitalisation Direction model has been updated in the light of the projected overspend. 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.
- 8.3 It is not within the Council's discretion to increase the Capitalisation Direction and finding mitigations is therefore essential.

9 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

9.1 Financial Implications

9.1.1 These are fully set out within the report.

9.2 Legal Implications

9.2.1 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.

9.2.2 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.

9.2.3 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.

9.3 Risk Management Implications

9.3.1 *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*

9.3.2 *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*

9.4 Environmental implications

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

9.5 Equality implications

9.5.1 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.

9.6 Procurement implications

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

9.7 Workforce implications

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

9.8 Property implications

9.8.1 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	Prv Var Adjusted £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Commissioning	(843)	455	(2,316)	(1,474)	(406)	(406)	0	0	1
Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities	12,586	5,825	13,329	743	1,254	1,254	940	0	2
Localities Social Work	15,380	11,637	21,167	5,787	6,048	6,048	200	0	3
Mental Health	4,710	2,459	6,460	1,750	2,063	2,063	50	0	4
People Adults Management	(4,464)	84	(3,581)	883	(3,429)	(4)	0	0	5
Public Health	0	(1,408)	0	(0)	0	0	0	(200)	6
Rehabilitation, Recovery and Reablement & Long Term Occupational Therapy	(52)	405	1,430	1,482	2,378	2,378	0	(200)	7
Safeguarding Partnership Team	505	252	377	(128)	(86)	(86)	0	0	8
Grand Total	27,822	19,709	36,866	9,044	7,820	11,245	1,190	(400)	

Notes

- The projected outturn reflects additional receipts including the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment grant (£0.475m); Supplementary Misuse Treatment and Recovery grant (£0.296m); Public Health Housing related programme funding (£0.375m) and the Drug Alcohol Action Team grant (£0.122m).
- The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to services to clients of £0.947m (7%) including Direct Payments 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.
- The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to employees costs due to reliance on interims £0.663m (22%); payments to third party organisations who provide accommodation and support of £3.215m (20%) against budget including £0.408m of expenditure relating to 2022/23; underachievement of income of £1.813m (30%) including client contributions of £1.678m; the overall projected expenditure is in line with 2022/23 reflecting increased service cost pressures which offset against the Transformation Savings plans which include increased Health contributions and reduced reliance on Nursing & Residential care
- The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to payments to third party organisations who provide accommodation and support of £2.034m (64%) 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.
- The projection reflects release of Integrated Care Board (ICB) Discharge Grant (£0.508m) and Urgent & Emergency Care Support Fund Grant (£0.241m); budgeted transformation savings reported in individual service areas across the Directorate £1.810m.
- Public Health projected outturn should match the budget of £8.092m, however, there may be opportunity to invest some of the Public Health grant in prevention programmes within Adults on a replacement funding basis (£0.200m). This strategy is reflected as an opportunity rather than included within the projected outturn whilst discussions are ongoing.
- The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to increased employee costs of £1.552m (65%) within the Rehabilitation, Recovery and Reablement & Long Term Occupational Therapy Service.
- No material variances to report.

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	760	25	25	0	0	810	160	7
Accommodation with Support	652	69	40	144	0	0	252	-400	5
Joint Funding	330	199	70	61	0	0	330	0	1
Practice and Process Development including reviews	810	394	210	206	0	0	810	0	1
Better use of Disabled Facilities Grant and equipment	100	44	30	26	0	0	100	0	1
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	0	0	0	250	0	0	-250	2
Mental Health	500	242	130	128	0	0	500	0	3
Transitions	400	0	130	270	0	0	400	0	4
Diverting demand	270	0	90	180	0	0	270	0	5
Focused & Locality Reviews	0	247	50	50	0	0	347	347	6
Review of hospital discharge/6-week review	350	0	120	230	0	0	350	0	5
Financial Assessments	150	100	25	25	0	50	200	50	7
Direct Payment recoupment	200	137	55	33	0	200	425	225	7
Levying the OPG determined charge rate	100	0	30	70	0	0	100	0	8
Further cost reductions, efficiencies and vacancy factor including alternative use of Adult Social Care grant	300	72	114	14	0	0	200	-100	9
Assistive Technology	420	0	140	280	0	0	420	0	5
Reduce Block Beds	206	60	150	30	0	0	240	34	10
People (Adults) Total	5,688	2,324	1,409	1,772	250	250	5,754	66	

Notes

1. Building on from the impact of 2022/23 further encouraging progress has been made and demonstrated in delivering the Transformation/ Savings reflected in the more favourable profiling of the savings being delivered.
2. This Transformation/ saving is part of the wider Corporate exercise on integration and is currently reflected as not being delivered in 2023/24.
3. The Mental Health Service undertook a detailed review of forecast commitments which identified a reduction of c£350k in the forecast expenditure. However, this reduction has been classified as business as usual rather than Transformation/ Savings. Transformation/ Savings are currently profiled to be delivered.
4. Linked with Accommodation with Support/Shared lives, potential for this workstream to be at risk due to procuring additional provision.
5. Delays in progressing the workstream will likely impact delivery.
6. Mitigating savings linked to the undertaking of focused and locality reviews.
7. Validation methodology being agreed to measure financial impact, however, initial analysis demonstrates savings on track to be delivered, likely to overachieve.
8. Savings will be delivered through the Appointee Team, to be transferred to the Finance & Commercial Directorate.
9. Transformation/ Saving will be closely monitored as many opportunities are being captured through other Transformation/ Savings plans and is currently reflected as not being fully delivered in 2023/24.
10. Validation methodology agreed; initial analysis demonstrates savings on track to be delivered, likely to overachieve.

Appendix 2 Children

Table 1 – Budget Monitoring Position

PEOPLE (Childrens)	Current Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Prv Var Adjusted	Previous Variance	Risks	Opps	Notes
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children's Centres / Family Hubs	524	276	524	0	0	0	0	0	
Early Help Hub	156	(426)	167	11	11	11	0	0	
Inclusion	1,199	872	1,470	271	35	35	0	0	1
People Children Management	2,626	2,042	2,440	(186)	(229)	(124)	0	0	2
Music Service (Traded)	0	122	0	0	0	0	0	0	
School Effectiveness	279	173	423	144	(180)	(180)	0	0	3
School Services	3,730	1,156	3,443	(287)	(250)	3	0	0	4
General Fund Total	8,513	4,215	8,467	(46)	(612)	(255)	0	0	
Central Schools Services DSG	0	127	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Early Years DSG	0	4,673	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	0	0	
Schools DSG	(336)	(25,863)	(660)	(324)	(324)	(324)	0	0	5
High Needs DSG	0	10,503	(225)	(225)	(49)	(49)	0	0	
DSG	(336)	(10,560)	(985)	(649)	(473)	(473)	0	0	
General Fund & DSG Total	8,177	(6,345)	7,482	(695)	(1,085)	(728)	0	0	

Notes

- 1 Expecting Inclusion services to overspend in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities due to high staff turnover and additional cost of recruiting interims.
- 2 The £186k underspend in the Children's Management area is due to holding vacancies against a savings relating to the restructure of the Education and Inclusion Directorate which has been delayed.
- 3 Some senior manager posts are currently being filled by interims during the restructure of the Council's Leadership Teams. This has now been concluded and the process to recruit permanent staff to these posts will take place shortly.
- 4 During the summer 2023 a review has been undertaken on all children's transport plans. This has led to a reduction in the number of travel plans which were not considered to be statutory. This has led to one-off savings in 2023-24 which will contribute to the £205k of on-going savings required in 2024-25.
- 5 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 need in the current academic year. The DSG is ring-fenced so has to remain within 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	-	-	-	-	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 underpend.
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	Prv Var Adjusted £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Carbon & sustainability	184	83	199	15	44	44			
Community Safety, Housing Regulation & Enforcement	1,898	(211)	1,928	30	212	212			1
Economic Development	47	32	95	48	(3)	0			
Environmental Services	11,755	4,700	11,204	(552)	250	1,091			2
Learning, Skills & Employment	160	(419)	118	(42)	(12)	(12)			
Localities, Libraries & Leisure	335	(69)	(866)	(1,201)	(939)	(939)			3
Place Management	(1,782)	378	798	2,581	1,770	1,770			4
Public Protection	547	202	509	(38)	(72)	(72)			
Transport & Highways Operations	1,796	(450)	1,346	(450)	327	637			5
Grand Total	14,940	4,246	15,331	390	1,576	2,731	0	0	6&7

Notes

- 1 There are some additional costs from regulatory work including GDPR c. £80k that is causing a pressure, however overall the forecast from Q1 has moderated due to various management actions and additional income expected resulting in a net favourable movement of £162k in the forecast from Q1.
- 2 In summary, in this significant area of service, additional income of some £400k (including one offs of £200) has further helped the position. Additionally the fortnightly delivery has achieved savings in advance of the current savings plan and is mitigating the Green waste saving issue of £275k. Ongoing management actions are also helping to ensure efficiency and cost avoidance e.g. using staff dynamically across street and depot etc.
- 3 Fees for Leisure that Slough charges the provider are £0.786m higher than budgeted, due to a reversion back to original terms & conditions post covid. There is an additional £0.115m grant for Street Games and reduced costs of £0.066m for Library services due to staff vacancies. Also here, is a saving of £0.186k on Community Development as expenditure is less than budget. The rest of the underspend is made of various smaller net favourable movements across many lines.
- 4 This is the main pressure in Place and being mitigated extensively on the other lines. This is due to unachievable budgets for recharges of £2.1m reported previously and an the additional movement from Q1 in the variance is due to a budget realignment from historic issues. The service is working hard to ensure both these issues are resolved this year and permanently. The level of progress can be seen given the overall directorate position is well below the pressure on this line and work continues.
- 5 Car parking receipts have been reviewed in detail and identified some non-recurring income not previously counted in the forecast of £535k including some prior year receipts. A further review of forecasts and allocation of this income is ongoing and results will be selected in the next quarter.

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	794					794	(370)	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	138	138				276	-	
Improve Trade Waste Business	10		10				10	-	8
Increase charges for Parking permits	48	24	24				48	-	9
Streetworks Section 50 licences	35	35	35				70	(35)	10
Streetworks Road Closure fees	65	33	32				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	3,305	325	200	275	-	3,830	(130)	

NOTES

1. Confirmation required on whether there is a reduction in spend. Saving needs moving to Housing, Property & Planning
2. Went live 26th June -The service is already aciving next years saving on this however this is assisting other pressures in the monitoring or alternatively
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. Pending update from service it may be that some of this risk is mitigated
5. May be challenged by members; a further £100k is planned in 24/25 Pending update from service. This 24/25 saving is not in b/fwd savings in current MT
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 c 9500
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	Prv Var Adjusted £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Housing (excluding HRA)	882	3,543	5,618	4,736	2,941	2,941			1
Planning	534	5	534	(0)	226	237			2
HP&P Management	706	283	706	(0)	10	10			3
Property	(4,146)	(1,216)	(4,146)	0	531	531			4
Building Management	5,571	852	5,571	(0)	278	278			5
Grand Total	3,547	3,467	8,283	4,736	3,986	3,997	0	0	
Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA)	0	(13,012)	(1,635)	(1,635)	(118)	(118)			

Notes

- The increased variance is driven by ongoing pressures on the Temporary Accommodation service. The operation of this service is currently being actively reviewed by senior management to identify and address the improvement of internal processes including more active challenge on the costs of the service (primarily rents paid to landlords) and maximising relevant benefit claim income. More rigorous checking and validating information on invoices has resulted in a number of inaccuracies being found and challenged. There is up to a 40% differential between the rates landlords are currently charging SBC for accommodation and the Local Housing Allowance. Visiting properties to ascertain eligible occupancy is continuing albeit at a slower pace due to staff resource issues which have now been dealt with; there will be a renewed focus on visiting activity over the next two weeks. A full report from the Director of Housing is expected to go to Cabinet outlining the issues and progress/recommendations made to address them. In the meantime, there is an action plan in place to address controllable issues.
- The latest review of this area has now indicated that the service can be contained within budget, mainly due to additional PPA income (£125k) and staff vacancies.
- The latest review of this area has now indicated that the service can be contained within budget.
- The latest review of this area has now indicated that the service can be contained within budget mainly due to additional income being recognised (£500k).
- The latest review of this area has now indicated that the service can be contained within budget, mainly due to an over accrual for energy from the last financial year (£154k).

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	300		200	100			300	-	1
Reduce spend on cleaning at Corporate Buildings	200		150	50			200	-	1&2
Corporate Contract efficiencies	50	50					50	-	
Savings from reduction in building management costs	100		100				100	-	2
Savings from additional efficiencies in facilities management	100		100				100	-	3
Reduce spend on repairs and maintenance at Corporate Buildings	-						0	-	1
Housing, Property & Planning Total	750	50	550	150	-	-	750	-	

NOTES

- This is dependent upon the timing of the sale of Corporate Buildings, with prospects are that this will be slower than envisaged
 - Dependent upon a restructure and review of TUPE'd Ts and Cs, delayed until probably to year end, and therefore the full year effect would not come in until 2024/25
 - Efficiencies identified through upskilling of in-house technical team and reduction in third party spend.
- £137K savings was delivered by Building Management through previous directorate Strategy & Improvement under Reference RES-2324-18A & RES-2324-53

Appendix 5 – Strategy & Improvement

Table 1 Budget Monitoring Position

STRATEGY & IMPROVEMENT & MONITORING OFFICER	Current Budget £'000	Actuals to date £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	Prv Var Adjusted £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Chief Executive	352	108	352	0	0	0			
Communications	235	189	235	1	1	1			
Customer Services	1,964	959	2,184	220	123	123			1
HR Core	2,369	1,108	2,271	(98)	(98)	(98)			2
IT	6,600	4,861	6,680	80	(98)	48	801		3
Strategy	(397)	87	(265)	132	133	133			4
Strategy & Innovation	725	354	846	121	44	44			5
Transformation	(103)	51	(103)	0	0	0			
Grand Total	11,745	7,717	12,200	455	104	249	801	0	
ED Monitoring Officer									
Democratic Services	1,839	1,609	1,764	(75)	(186)	(186)			6
Grand Total MO	1,839	1,609	1,764	(75)	(186)	(186)	0	0	
Grand Total	13,583	9,326	13,964	381	(82)	64	801	0	

Notes

- The overspend is due to approval for 18 additional interim staff to support the contact centre from April to June, cost £0.158m. A further extension was granted for 12 of these staff from July to October at a cost of £0.089m. Approval is now sought to retain the 12 FTE from November through to March 2024 on a phased reduction down to 6 FTE. The costs of this are factored into the forecast at an estimated £0.099m. In addition to the above, there is a shortfall on Registrar Services income target of £0.035m. However, underspends within the overall service from vacancies held has helped to offset the overspend by a total of £0.166m.
- The forecast underspend of £0.098m arises from the 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 across the service.
- The service is projecting to overspend by £0.08m. The forecast includes the business requirement to commit £0.15m additional spend on IT hardware equipment refresh for staff for ageing equipment without a budget. The initial outlay for laptops was capitalised, and they should be refreshed on a 4-year cycle (300 pa) which equates to c£0.25m pa. There are underspends of £0.070m due to the challenges arising from attracting and recruiting the right calibre of IT staff. There are several risks that will need to be addressed –
 - The replacement of the back-office servers and networking infrastructure is estimated to cost c£500k. This has not been factored into the forecast but is highlighted for the present time as the service progresses on further work to produce a timeframe and precise estimates as more information comes to light.
- 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 £0.132m
- The service has taken on 2 interims for 6 months to meet the capacity required to establish and implement improvements within the council and Slough Children First at a cost of £0.090m. There is also a budget pressure of £0.036m due to the post that transferred from the Children's directorate without a corresponding budget to fund the costs.
- The £0.075m underspend is mainly due to posts unfilled for part of the year due to challenges in recruiting the right calibre of staff. There is also an additional contribution of grant £0.080m received from the government and the parishes to cover part of costs of the elections in May. The 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
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	Prv Var Adjusted £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Commercial	751	405	717	(34)	57	57			1
Finance	504	5,016	1,867	1,363	751	774			2
Financial Governance	1,547	2,232	1,613	66	25	875			3
Revenues, Benefits & Charges	1,794	24,034	2,083	289	622	753			4
Strategic Finance	46	1,620	217	171	169	174			5
Transactional Services	665	233	604	(61)	42	42			6
Grand Total	5,308	33,540	7,101	1,793	1,665	2,674	0	0	

Notes

- The service is expecting to underspend due to a vacant post held. However, pressures remain from the staff TUPE from the outsourced RSM procurement now transferred inhouse. The two staff are paid on a day rate basis. Efforts to recruit permanently has failed on two 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.
- The projected overspend is comprised of staff costs for finance (£4.9m) being a total of £1.022m above budget. The adverse variance is driven by the large number of interims retained to provide the resilience and continuity to the finance function during a challenging period for the council. The forecast assumes that the permanent staff recruitment will not be completed before the end of the financial year for below the SFM and FM levels. Therefore, it is envisaged that some interim staff will be retained across the financial year. The total includes an additional 2 fte posts over establishment working on the asset disposal and the costs of a finance recruitment specialist.
The total is further impacted by £0.235m which relates to the finance share of the Support Services saving currently showed as unachievable along with £0.115m shortfall from DFE grant on overheads costs for Slough Children First Company.
The remaining balance relates to the costs for £0.128m 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. A contribution is expected to be made from corporate budgets of £0.231m to cover these costs.
- The service is projecting a budget pressure of £0.050m arises from legacy pre covid income budget issues from court proceeds in the Investigations that is not achievable. There is an underspend on a vacant post in the Risk and Insurance team that is netted off against minor variances that total £0.016m.
- The forecast projection for Housing Benefit have been updated to include the subsidy expected to be recovered from the DWP. The subsidy recovered remains less than that which is actually paid to residents leaving a budget pressure of £0.204m. 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. The remaining budget pressure of £0.085m is on staffing, where agency and overtime are being used to manage the service needs.
- The main variations remain at £0.028m surplus variance that stems from a one-off credit arising from closure of unused SBC bank accounts. There is also a £0.200m overspend forecast due to needing to bridge the savings gap against the External audit fees budget for 23/24.
- There is an anticipated underspend on staff costs over budget, the expectation is that this will be used to cover the 2 interim staff in the team of 15fte.

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	300	140				440	-	6
Revenues and Benefits agency savings	450	161	289				450	-	
MRP reduction as a consequence of asset disposal decisions	3,500		2,500	1,000			3,500	-	7
Finance & Commercial Total	7,506	1,073	4,634	1,400	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	1,073	4,767	1,768	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 £289k in P6 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 - approved	Movement of budget between projects	Revised Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Previous Variance	Notes
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
GENERAL FUND									
Learning Disability Change Programme	29	0		29	1	1	(28)	(29)	
HOLD (Hold Ownership for people with Long-term Disabilities)		204		204	0	0	(204)	0	1
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,140	272		1,412	323	1,412	0	0	
Adults TOTAL	1,169	476		1,645	324	1,413	(232)	(29)	
Primary Expansions	167	0		167	0	80	(87)	(87)	
Schools Modernisation Programme	810	90		900	18	950	50	(128)	2
SEN Resources Expansion	1,250	0		1,250	27	470	(780)	(784)	
Special School Expansion-Primary,Secondary & Post 16	1,675	10		1,685	17	136	(1,549)	(1,154)	
Secondary Expansion Programme	315	0		315	0	40	(275)	(315)	
Schools Devolved Capital	80	0		80	143	80	0	0	
323 High St/Haybrook	26	0		26	0	0	(26)	(26)	
Children's Services TOTAL	4,323	100		4,423	205	1,756	(2,667)	(2,494)	3
Loan to GRES-for Nova House remedial work	5,000	0		5,000	400	400	(4,600)	(4,600)	4
Capital Works following Stock Condition Survey	400	247		647	18	300	(347)	0	
Hub Development	1,047	273		1,320	0	0	(1,320)	(1,047)	5
B4899 Localities Strategy North (Britwell)					46	325	325	0	
B4902 Localities Strategy Central (SMP)					(670)	0	0	0	
Thames Valley University Site	0			0	0	0	0	100	
Leisure Centre Farnham Road	100			100	22	22	(78)	(100)	
Asset Disposal				0	550	0	0	0	6
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	82			82	0	0	(82)	(82)	
Compulsory Purchase Order Reserve	0			0	1	1	1	0	
Cornwall House-Fire Strategy	950			950	0	250	(700)	0	
Office Accommodation Strategy	900			900	0	900	0	0	
Housing, Property & Planning TOTAL	8,479	520		8,999	374	2,198	(6,801)	(5,729)	
Refuse fleet & Grounds Plant equipment		114		114	85	114	0	0	
Local Sustainable Transport Fund	222	0		222	0	0	(222)	0	
Flood Defence (Sponge City)	1,482	766		2,248	194	1,000	(1,248)	(1,027)	
Zone 1 - Sutton Lane Gyrotory (MRT)		868		868	266	868	0	0	
Zone 4 - Stoke Road (Stoke Rd TVU junction)	2,500	397		2,897	207	2,897	0	0	
Langley High Street Improvements LEP		511		511	63	511	0	0	
A4 Safer Roads	1,511	137		1,648	2	500	(1,148)	(648)	
A4 Cycle Lane	10,168	0		10,168	269	500	(9,668)	(6,600)	7
Electric Vehicle Network	157	0		157	0	0	(157)	0	
Car Club	100	0		100	0	0	(100)	0	
Carbon Management - Public Sector Decarb. Scheme	22	0		22	0	22	0	0	
Reading Archives - Extension (SBC Contribution)	188	0		188	0	188	0	0	
Traffic Signals Maintenance Grant		66		66	56	66	0	0	
Cemetery Extension	100	0		100	0	100	0	0	
Additional Transport & Highways Grant funded projects	2,489		(545)	1,944	406	357	(1,587)	(1)	
Patching, surfacing and highway replacement works			261	261	0	261	0	0	
LTP Implementation Plan	139		284	423	4	284	(139)	(139)	
Eden School				0	34	34	34	0	
DSO Replacement Fleet	500			500	0	500	0	(500)	
Destination Farnham Road	2,768			2,768	0	300	(2,468)	0	
Parlaunt Road	0			0	0	750	750	0	8
Place & Communities TOTAL	22,346	2,859	0	25,205	1,586	9,252	(15,953)	(8,915)	
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	36,317	3,955	0	40,272	2,489	14,619	(25,653)	(17,167)	

Table 2 - HRA

CAPITAL PROJECTS	Current Budget	Slippage - to be approved	Movement of budget between projects	Revised Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Previous Variance	Notes
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
HRA									
RMI Capital Programme									
Commissioning of Repairs Maintenance and Investment Contract	250			250	0	50	(200)	(200)	
Boiler Replacement and heating	317			317	159	317	0	0	
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement	415	31		446	155	446	0	0	
Electrical Systems	138	0		138	11	138	0	0	
External rendering, repairs and redecoration of housing block	2,134	0		2,134	0	2,519	385	385	
Garage & Environmental Improvements		527		527	506	527	0	0	
Capitalised Repairs	100	210		310	89	300	(10)	(10)	
FRA & Asbestos Removal Works	2,000	173		2,173	688	2,180	7	7	
Major Aids & Adaptations	300	0		300	236	300	0	0	
Decarbonisation Works	500	81		581	0	500	(81)	(81)	
RMI Capital Programme Total	6,154	1,022	0	7,176	1,844	7,277	101	101	
Planned Maintenance Capital									
Windows and Door Replacement	842			842	39	842	0	0	
Roof Replacement	1,726	136		1,862	434	1,800	(62)	(62)	
Structural	211	109		320	53	240	(80)	(80)	
Security & Controlled Entry Modernisation	300			300	32	300	0	0	
Capitalised voids	60			60	2	40	(20)	(20)	
Planned Maintenance Capital Total	3,139	245	0	3,384	560	3,222	(162)	(162)	
Affordable Homes									
Tower and Ashbourne	0			0	80	900	900	0	9
Affordable Homes	800			800	108	108	(692)	0	
Total Affordable Homes	800	0	0	800	188	1,008	208	0	
HRA TOTAL	10,093	1,267	0	11,360	2,592	11,507	147	(61)	
CAPITAL PROJECTS TOTAL	46,410	5,222	0	51,632	5,081	26,126	(25,506)	(17,228)	

Notes

- 1 Project has completed. Funds to be returned if CCG have no further uses for monies (awaiting clarification on this from CCG)
- 2 Extra spend at Pippins School to address RAAC issue - additional income already received but not reflected in the programme budget.
- 3 SEN projects in various schools that are unable to be completed this year due to capacity - to be slipped to 24/25.
- 4 Nova House loan, previously identified as savings but department has now confirmed that this may be needed in 24/25 (Homes England and Leaseholder payments)
- 5 HUB Development budget duplication - saving.
- 6 Asset disposal costs funded by capital receipts (year to date receipts total £22.2m)
- 7 Preliminary designs submitted to Cabinet in July; this project will continue into 2024/25.
- 8 New project to provide new traffic signals - LEP funding must be spent in 23/24.
- 9 Asset is due for disposal - overspend will be funded from capital receipts.

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Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 December 2023
SUBJECT:	General Fund Revenue Budget 2024-25, and Medium Term Financial Strategy 24/25 to 27/28
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Chahal – Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue and Benefits
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
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	A Draft Savings Proposals for 2024/25 B Draft Pressures Proposals for 2024/25 C Council Tax Base calculation D Equality Impact Statement

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out the draft revenue budget proposals for 2024/25, the draft Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the Council Tax base for 2024/25.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 as the basis for consultation with the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee and other interested parties.
2. Agrees the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as the basis for consultation with the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee and other interested parties
3. Agrees that the Council Tax Base be set at 44,358.44 (Band D equivalents) for 2024/25 as outlined in Appendix C

Commissioner Review

To ensure conformity with the best value duty and to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, the council is required to prepare a plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap identified across the period of its medium-term financial strategy.

An overarching medium-term financial strategy is not only good practice but is required to provide the strategic financial framework for the council. It is particularly important during a period when the council is facing significant changes and challenges and is central to the delivery of priority outcomes outlined in the corporate plan, in an affordable and sustainable way over the medium-term period.

Whilst recognising that there remains a budget gap and further reviews need to be completed to finalise the budget for Cabinet and Full Council consideration, the commissioners welcome the commencement of the engagement on the work in progress in the development of the medium-term financial strategy and a range of proposals for contemplation.

Taking the difficult decisions in closing the long-term budget gap needs to be considered in the context of growing demand, tightening funding and an increasingly complex and unpredictable financial environment. In addition to the above for the council more specifically, the risks factors intrinsic to the council's prior years accounts accumulating on a constantly evolving balance sheet, which reflects the changing operations and external conditions and could still have the potential to require material adjustment within the current or future financial years.

Different scenarios should be modelled to stress test the key assumptions, including the future risk of a squeeze on public finances and the relationship with regard the risks faced by the council and the level of balances and reserves needed to cover such risks.

The council should aim to minimise the need for government exceptional financial support and take steps towards building better financial resilience. Meaning the council must remain viable, stable and effective in the medium to long term, take the right steps towards financial sustainability and build resilience to shocks, to make sure that service delivery, especially for the most vulnerable citizens is not disrupted.

Options

Option 1 – seek formal approval of the draft budget to allow for public consultation, including with the business community and formal scrutiny of the proposals by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee. This represents best practice and **is recommended**.

Option 2 – approve the Council Tax base independently of the draft revenue budget and consider the revenue budget following consultation with the business community by the end of February. **This is not recommended** as it does not allow Cabinet to formally consider and approve the draft budget and limits the opportunity for the public and scrutiny members to consider the proposals and make recommendations.

Report – Introduction

- 2.1 Under the Council's constitution, by the end of February, but before Full Council, Cabinet is required to report on the impact of the provisional Local Government Finance settlement and consult with the business community on the Council's budget proposals for the following year. The Council's Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, will receive the draft budget for the purpose of scrutinising the proposals and can consider the adequacy of any planned consultation. We need to consider responses before proposing the Budget to Full Council. In order to allow this to happen the draft proposals need to be approved to allow for consultation to take place. This report summarises the current position on the Council's revenue budget preparations for 2024/25 as a basis for that consultation.
- 2.2 Between the draft budget being published and before cabinet consider a final budget, we will utilise our Citizenspace online tools to consult on the budget and encourage individuals, groups and other interested individuals to be able to comment on the overall budget and proposed changes. Where individual service changes require specific statutory engagement, the time for this to take place has been built into overall timings of savings delivery.
- 2.3 It is also a requirement under the Constitution for Cabinet to approve, or delegate the approval of, its Council Taxbase estimates for the following year by 15th January. This report contains estimates of the Council Taxbase for Cabinet approval.

Options

Option 1 – seek formal approval of the draft budget to allow for public consultation, including with the business community and formal scrutiny of the proposals by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee. This represents best practice and **is recommended**.

Option 2 – approve the Council Tax base independently of the draft revenue budget and consider the revenue budget following consultation with the business community by the end of February. **This is not recommended** as it does not allow Cabinet to formally consider and approve the draft budget and limits the opportunity for the public and scrutiny members to consider the proposals and make recommendations.

- 2.4 Preparations for next year’s budget have been undertaken against a backdrop of continued uncertainty about funding levels, and in particular the achievement and application of capital receipts in both the current financial year, and previous financial years. The information in this report has however been compiled using the best available information and evidence we have available at the time of drafting.
- 2.5 This report has been published in advance of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement, which is expected to be announced in week commencing 18th December 2023. Assumptions have therefore had to be made on the level of Government funding, but these are based on prior years commitments given in the Local Government settlement as well as information from the recent Autumn Statement on 22nd November 2023. If there are any changes when the detailed Local Government Financial Settlement is announced, these will be amended in the final budget proposals to cabinet in February 2024.
- 2.6 All comments received on these budget proposals will be submitted to Cabinet on 26th February 2024 alongside any impact from the announcement of the Finance Settlement, and the outcome of current work on the achievement and application of capital receipts. This will allow Cabinet to determine its final budget package and recommend an appropriate Council Tax level to Council, which is due to approve the 2024/25 budget and Council Tax on March 7th 2024.

3 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2027/28

- 3.1 Initial preparations for the 2024/25 budget have focussed on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024/25 to 2027/28. This brings together the existing budget and known or anticipated changes over the coming 4 years. The initial figures in the MTFS were based on the Capitalisation Direction (CD) model, with known changes being made to those numbers. Exceptional approval has been granted by the DLUHC Secretary of State to treat revenue expenditure as capital in order for Slough to balance its budget.
- 3.2 Setting a Medium Term Financial Strategy is a key part of the Council learning to live within its means. Setting a budget and medium term financial plan must underpin and provide the resources by which the Council delivers its Corporate Plan. A refreshed Corporate plan has been agreed during the financial year 2023/24 and identifies the following 3 priorities:
- A borough for Children and Young People to Thrive
 - A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives

- A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough

3.3 The resources that are allocated in these budget proposals look to ensure that we are able to deliver against these priorities. At the same time, the Council is aware that it needs to live within its means, deliver Best Value services and ensure that it is able to become financially sustainable and reduce the need for exceptional support that has been granted through the CD model.

3.4 The CD model contained best estimates at that time for Slough’s budget requirements over the years to come, and the value of the exceptional capitalisation of revenue expenditure required, which Slough is required to reduce over time. Those figures were shared with DLUHC and published as follows:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CD Requirement	31,575	23,078	16,917	12,159	6,268	0
Year on Year Change		(8,497)	(6,161)	(4,758)	(5,891)	(6,268)

Any variation from the CD requirement shown in this table requires DLUHC approval and Commissioner support. On this basis, any changes within the MTFS from the figures in the CD model must be balanced by the savings requirement.

3.5 The most significant changes are as follows:

- Growth Requirements in 2024/25 are £18.7m. This includes £10.5m of growth that will right-size existing budgets, particularly in people focussed budgets. Growth proposals have also been made for the subsequent 2 financial years, and have been incorporated into the MTFS. Further growth has been built in to subsequent financial years at £2.5m per annum on top of the proposals for those years along with estimates for contractual inflation and pay inflation. This compares to the CD Model which allowed for £10m growth per year plus pay inflation. It will be important to continue to refresh these assumptions on at least an annual basis as part of future budget setting.
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was expected to be showing a reduction in 2024/25 of £2.8m but instead, due to the issues regarding application of capital receipts, is expected to increase by £2.393m, with a significant fall (£4.046m) expected in 2025/26 when more asset sales are expected. This is based on the best information that we have at this time but does rely on achieving asset sales in the timeline assumed. This will have to be closely monitored, managed and reported on through our budget management reporting, and the impact of any variations be clearly identified at as early as stage as possible.
- Net interest costs show an increase of £2.7m in 2024/25. This is a combination of the costs of interest on loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), and market loans, net of interest earned on investments and from loans to Council owned companies. Although some £75m of existing loans with the PWLB need to be refinanced at substantially higher interest

rates than the maturing loan, market loans are coming to an end. The net impact is that costs of loans is increasing, by about £1.2m. Additionally, interest earned on investments, including to Council owned companies, reduces by £1.5m in 2024/25.

- Greater than expected receipts from Business Rates in 2024/25 and a higher Council Tax Base than originally assumed have led to an increase in the expected contribution from the Collection Fund of £10.3m in 2024/25 compared to £4.5m in the CD model, with further increases (although at a lower scale) in subsequent years.
- The Local Government finance settlement was implicitly assumed to show no change in future years. However, the latest expectation is that Government Grants will increase by £2.2m, partly driven by the September CPI inflation figure, and additionally taking account of increases in Social Care grants that were not factored into the original CD model. We do however recognise that there is far less certainty on funding for years 2025/26 onwards given this extends beyond the life of the current spending review period and have reduced expectations around funding, and specifically some social care funding, to reflect this uncertainty.
- As a result of the changes outlined above, and others to a lesser extent, the original savings requirement of £12.9m per year has increased to £13.6m.
- Current savings proposals amount to £10.837m, which is below the level required to balance the budget to the approved CD amount without using one-off sources. A draw down from the Budget Smoothing Reserve, and other relevant reserves, of £3.523m is therefore required at this stage in order to help balance the budget for 2024/25. This is an increase on the net £3m drawdown that is included in the 2023/24 budget and will continue to be reduced over the life of the MTFs once the results of transformation investment materialise and are calculated in future years – for example, in 2025/26 the expected draw down is only £51,000. This is a significant draw down of one-off funding and is not sustainable in the long-term. This is also on top of receiving exceptional support through the Capitalisation Direction. The Council still has significant work to do therefore to demonstrate it can be fully financially sustainable.
- As this is a one-off measure to balance the budget it means there is an underlying gap to carry forward into 2025/26, and applies in balancing the budget in 2026/27 which sees a pressure carrying forward into 2027/28. There are a number of projects underway where further savings are anticipated to be delivered on top of those included in the budget, but the exact amount of savings are not yet able to be calculated to a sufficient level of accuracy. These will be refined and the drawdown from reserves reduced to nil which will help close the gap on Year 4 over time.

3.6 Taking account of these changes and caveats, the MTFs is as shown in the following table. In this table the numbers represent the changes to budgeted figures year on year, not what the new budget figures are. The projected budget

figures for each directorate over the coming years, based on the changes shown in the MTFS table, are shown in Table 2.

Table 1 – MTFS 2024-25 to 2027-28

MTFS Planning		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Notes and assumptions
Underlying Gap	Underlying budget gap rolling forward	31,575	23,078	16,917	12,159	Approved Capitalisation Direction
	Total C/F 2024-25	31,575	23,078.000	16,917	12,159	
PRESSURES						
Prior Year Gap b/f			1,523	(3,473)	2,264	Savings gap from previous year carried forward
Pay Award	6% in 23/24, 4% in 24/25, then 2% pa	2,660	1,383	1,411	1,439	23-24 pay award assumed 6% - 24/25 4% then 2%
Contract Inflation	CPI & RPIX - keep under review	1,812	1,496	1,428	1,466	CPI mainly, some contracts RPI, insurance assumed at 5%
Growth	Growth and Pressure submissions	14,254	3,781	4,203	4,203	Current pressures, estimated new pressures, make senior restructure permanent ; delete transformation budget and add £2.5m unspecified growth
	Children's Company	4,400				This year's virement is one-off but ...
	Contingency	(4,400)				... make permanent for 24/25 from contingency
	Reduction in contingency	(1,500)				In line with lower level of savings required
Loss of income	Loss of income from asset disposals	1,283	(649)	0	0	Updated with the latest sales forecasts
Companies (incl SCF)	Net surplus/losses of owned companies	(1,471)	(497)	680	796	SCF business plan - Year four Loan default
MRP	Adjustments required to correct MRP	2,393	(4,046)	(661)	523	Updated following latest sales and forecast outturn
Interest Costs		2,708	(352)			Borrowing of £75m @ 5.1%
ICT Transformation	Remove budget	(1,000)	0	0	0	Budget was time limited to 2 years
Transformation	Remove budget	(2,500)	0	0	0	Budget was time limited to 2 years
	TOTAL GROWTH/PRESSURES	18,639	2,639	3,589	10,692	
FINANCING						
RSG	As per LG Finance Settlement Dec 2022	(484)	(37)			CPI in September 2023
Council Tax	Increase by max allowed 4.99% pa	(6,800)	(5,581)	(5,943)	(6,326)	including 2% ASC precept continuing after 24/25
Business Rates	Based on revised estimates	(5,715)	(606)	1,876	(340)	updated with latest forecast
Social Care Grant	Increases based on Government figures	(1,127)	(878)	(220)	(220)	source Pixel
Market Sustainability	£1.265bn in 23/24, £1.877bn in 24/25	(610)	1,800			Grant currently ends 24/25, assumes not replaced
Discharge Grant	£0.4bn in 23/24 and £.683bn in 24/25	(380)				Assumes continues from 25/26; Pixel
ASC Workforce Fund		340	40			Assumes phasing out over 24/25 and 25/26; Pixel
Reserves	Draw Down from / (give to) Reserves	(1,523)	3,473	(2,264)		Use of Budget Smoothing Reserve
	TOTAL FINANCING	(16,300)	(1,789)	(6,551)	(6,886)	
Savings	Savings Target	(10,837)	(7,011)	(1,796)	(9,697)	
	NET BUDGET GAP	23,078	16,917	12,159	6,268	
	Savings Offered Up @ 13/11/2023	(10,837)	(7,011)	(1,796)		
	Gap to be closed	(0)	(0)	(0)	9,697	

- 3.7 The following table shows summary budgets for the next 4 years. This shows large increases in the Corporate Budgets line. At this stage estimated pressures for contractual and pay inflation are included here pending detailed work to estimate them at directorate level.
- 3.8 The line highlighted in yellow shows the amount of one-off money that we would have to draw down to ensure that we could set a budget. Between draft and final budget setting we need to seek ways to reduce the reliance on one-off resources.
- 3.9 The importance of managing any budget that is set cannot be underestimated. In the financial year 2023/24 there is a significant overspend of over £8m that if this cannot be reduced to zero, will have to be funded from one-off sources and reduces the capacity of the organisation to manage any future financial shocks that may arise such as further economic instability, significant demographic demand

increases or changes in national policy that impact on Slough. Setting realistic budgets and managing to those are a key part of improving our financial resilience.

Table 2 Summary Budgets 2024/25 to 2027/28

	2023/24 Original Budget	2024/25 Proposed Budget	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults Services	27,822	35,127	37,559	38,150	38,150
Children's Services	8,616	8,375	8,375	8,375	8,375
Slough Children First	40,514	39,043	38,521	39,301	40,097
Regeneration, Housing and Environment	17,271	14,856	10,626	9,701	9,701
Public Health and Public Protection	1,953	1,953	1,753	1,703	1,703
Strategy and Transformation	11,745	11,196	10,871	11,062	11,062
Law and Governance	664	628	597	597	597
Finance & Commercial (s151)	5,308	4,824	2,624	2,624	2,624
Total Service Budgets	113,892	116,001	110,925	111,513	112,309
Corporate Budgets:					
Other Corporate Budgets	15,299	15,242	22,145	24,012	33,383
Pension Deficit	5,014	5,014	5,014	5,014	5,014
Minimum Revenue Provision	13,393	15,786	11,740	11,079	11,602
Capital Financing	6,539	8,246	7,894	7,894	7,894
Total Corporate Budgets	40,244	44,288	46,793	47,999	57,894
Total Expenditure	154,137	160,290	157,718	159,512	170,203
Funded By:					
Council Tax Income	-72,995	-79,795	-85,377	-91,319	-97,645
Business Rates - Local Share	-30,591	-36,306	-36,912	-35,036	-35,376
Revenue Support Grant	-7,302	-7,786	-7,823	-7,823	-7,823
Other Government Grants	-8,674	-9,801	-10,639	-10,859	-11,079
Budget Smoothing Reserve	-3,000	-3,523	-51	-2,315	-2,315
Capitalisation Direction	-31,575	-23,078	-16,917	-12,159	-6,268
Total Funding	-154,137	-160,289	-157,718	-159,511	-160,506
General Fund Balanced Budget	0	0	0	1	9,697

NB "Other Corporate Budgets" in 24/25 onwards contains all Pay Inflation and in later years all contractual inflation

4 PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2024/25

4.1 Last year's Autumn statement made some changes to the 2021 Spending Review, which had laid out spending plans for 2022/23 to 2024/25 for government departments. The original plans were flat for Councils, except for increased funding for Adult Social Care. The changes announced included:

- Confirmation that Revenue Support Grant would increase by the September value of CPI. This was 6.7% and is worth an estimated £0.484m to Slough.
- Additional funding for Social Care of £1 billion nationally in 2023/24 and £1.7bn nationally in 2024/25. This is worth an estimated £1.127m to Slough in 2024/25.
- Money set aside for Adult Social Care funding reforms of £1.265bn (23/24) and £1.877bn (24/25) to still be awarded to Councils, but to meet existing pressures with the reforms delayed by 2 years. This is worth an estimated additional £0.620m to Slough in 2024/25. At this stage, it is considered prudent to assume that this grant will end after 2024/25, which creates a pressure in 25/26 of c £1.8m.

- It has been assumed for budget setting purposes that there will be no money accruing from the New Homes Bonus.
- Changing the referendum limits for Council Tax increases from 1.99% to 2.99% and extending the power of Councils with Social Care Responsibilities to increase the Adult Social Care precept by up to 2% per year. In 2023/24 Slough was granted the power to increase its Council Tax rate above the referendum limit in light of its financial challenges, and duly did so, raising the rate by 9.99%. The assumption included in the model for 2024/25 and throughout the life of the MTFP is the ability to raise by 2.99% plus an Adult Social Care precept of 2% per year. (A total of 4.99%)
- Confirmation that the small business rating multiplier will be frozen for FY24/25 and the standard multiplier will be increased in line with the September Consumer Price Index (CPI). These two multipliers will be decoupled following the recent Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023. As a result, different indexation factors will be applied. This will ensure the small businesses will be protected from increases in their business rates.

4.2 The Council receives external funding through a number of specific grants. Until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is announced in late December the position on these will not be absolutely clear, and so the following does contain some assumptions.

- Adult Social Care Grant (initially for funding reform). This is known as the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund. As referred to above the introduction of the Adult Social Care reforms, including the cap on individual client contributions and the “fair cost of care” arrangements was expected to be a significant funding and service issue for 2023/24. The Government has delayed implementation of the reforms until at least October 2025, but retained the funding for Local Authorities that had been set aside for those reforms.
- This grant is intended to be used to increase fees paid to providers, improve social care workforce capacity, and reduce adult social care waiting times. It is likely that most if not all measures undertaken using this grant would create a permanent financial commitment, and as such if the grant is withdrawn at the end of 2024/25 this will create a budget pressure. The grant was worth £1.207m in 2023/24 and is estimated to be worth £1.815m in 2024/25.
- A previous grant, introduced in 2019, known as the Social Care Grant, is also paid to upper tier authorities such as Slough. There is no specific ring fence on this grant. The grant was worth £7.76m and is estimated to be worth £8.887m in 2024/25.
- The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a pooled budget which consists of several schemes, some of which are managed by the Council and some by the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The NHS contribution to adult social care through the BCF is expected to increase by 5.67% in 2024/25. The BCF is spent on schemes agreed between the Council and the ICB. The Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) is expected to stay at its 2023/24 level, or £3.989m for Slough.

- The final source of funding in respect of Adult Social Care is the Discharge Fund. The purpose of this grant is to support Councils to build additional adult social care and community based reablement capacity to reduce hospital discharge delays. The grant was £600m nationally in 2023/24 and is an expected £1bn in 2024/25. This equates to £0.559m in 2023/24 for Slough and an anticipated £0.932m in 2024/25.
- There is a ring-fence on Public Health expenditure. The grant for 2023/24 is £8.106m. Indicative allocations for 2024/25 were announced at the same time as 2023/24 allocations were confirmed, and Slough's indicative grant is £8.214m.
- The Services Grant is provided to all tiers of local government in recognition of the vital services delivered by Councils. As such there is no ring-fence or condition applied to this grant. Slough's share is £1.225m and is expected to remain unchanged in 2024/25.

Council Tax

- 4.3 Council Tax at present levels is expected to generate total income of £72.863m in 2024/25, before any change to the Tax Base is factored in, and before any increase to rates is applied. The Council Tax base is expected to broadly increase by around 2% per annum, however there is bigger jump in 2024/25 at 2.78%. The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 has been estimated at 44,358 Band D equivalents which at current levels would generate total income of £74.888m in 2024/25.
- 4.4 This represents an increase of 1030.2 arising from the occupation of new properties during 2023/24. The surplus/deficit on the Council Tax element of the Collection Fund in 2023/24 will need to be assessed by 15 January 2024.
- 4.5 The Government limits Council Tax increases by requiring councils to hold a local referendum for any increases equal to or more than a threshold percentage which is normally included in the Local Government Financial Settlement. This is currently 2.99% plus an option for Councils with responsibility for adult social care, such as Slough, to increase the Adult Social Care precept with a 2% increase on Council Tax. In 2023/24 Slough was granted the power to increase its Council Tax rate above the referendum limit in light of its financial challenges, and duly did so, raising the rate by 9.99%. Each 1% increase in the Council Tax is estimated to provide an additional £0.75m of funding.
- 4.6 The Cabinet at its meeting on 26th February will recommend to Council the level of Council Tax considering the Local Government Finance Settlement, the results of the consultation and the final budget proposals.

5 BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In preparing draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and changes to the MTFS in later years each directorate has considered potential pressures on its services which are laid out in Appendix B. The proposals are summarised in the tables below.

- 5.2 All proposals have been scrutinised by senior officers and Cabinet members in a series of Star Chamber budget challenge meetings.

Table 3 Summary of Pressures

Pressures BY TYPE	23/24		New	Service	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Directorate	Budget	Rebasing	Statutory	Pressure	24/25	25/26	26/27
Adults Services	27.822	8.126	-	1.504	9.630	1.461	1.512
Children's Services	49.13	0.357	-	-	0.357	-	-
Regeneration, Housing & Environ	17.271	1.400	-	-	1.400	-	-
Public Health & Public Protection	1.952	-	-	-	-	-	-
Strategy and Transformation	11.745	-	-	1.734	1.734	(0.180)	0.191
Law and Governance	0.664	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finance & Commercial	5.308	-	0.378	0.155	0.533	-	-
plus Cross-Council					0.600		
TOTAL	113.892	9.883	0.378	3.393	14.254	1.281	1.703

- 5.3 Total pressures amount to £14.254m. Of this figure, £9.883m is in respect of re-basing the current budget which is showing a significant in year overspend. The Statutory pressure referred to is an increase in External Audit Fees which is set centrally and over which the Council has no control.
- 5.4 The pressures in Adult Social Care directly support strategic priority 2 (“A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives”) as laid out in the Council’s Corporate Plan “A Fresh Start for Slough”. The pressures in Finance and in Strategy are all considered unavoidable.
- 5.5 The pressures outlined in the table above are based on discrete, identified pressures. They exclude contract and pay inflation; however, contract inflation is built into the Directorate budget totals shown in table 2 above, para 3.5.
- 5.6 Directorates also considered what savings could be achieved, and these are summarised below. The figures in the tables are net savings figures after any investments required to deliver them.

Table 4 Summary of Savings

Savings BY TYPE	23/24			Service	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Directorate	Budget	Efficiency	Income	Reduction	24/25	25/26	26/27
Adults Services	27.822	0.923	1.457	0.350	2.730	0.829	0.921
Children's Services	49.13	0.505	0.037	-	0.542	-	-
Regeneration, Housing & Environ	17.271	2.650	0.725	0.686	4.061	3.660	0.825
Public Health & Public Protection	1.952	0.124	-	-	0.124	(0.054)	-
Strategy and Transformation	11.745	1.201	-	-	1.201	0.145	-
Law and Governance	0.664	0.039	-	-	0.039	0.231	0.050
Finance & Commercial	5.308	1.090	0.050	-	1.140	2.200	-
plus Cross-Council		0.750	0.250	-	1.000	-	-
TOTAL	113.892	7.282	2.519	1.036	10.837	7.011	1.796

- 5.7 Total savings offered up amount to £11.837m with subsequent impacts in 2025/26 of £7.011m and in 2026/27 of £1.796m. Roughly 60% of the savings (£7.282m) come from efficiency measures, with £3.519m of savings coming from income raising measures. Only £1.036m constitute reductions in service.
- 5.8 In considering the deliverability of each saving, a risk rating, Red, Amber, Green, was applied. The summary is outlined in the table below. The table shows that of the proposals £5.1m are considered to have low risk of non-deliverability, and savings of £4.5m are considered to have medium risk of non-deliverability. This leaves £1.3m of savings that are considered to have a higher risk of non-deliverability. This risk is mitigated by holding a sum in contingency for non-delivery of savings, which has been set at £1.5m per year.

Table 5 Risk Rating of Savings Proposals

Savings BY DELIVERABILITY				
Deliverability	Green - Low	Amber - Medium	Red - High	TOTAL
Directorate				
Adults Services	1.108	1.322	0.300	2.730
Children's Services	0.542	-	-	0.542
Regeneration, Housing & Environment	2.029	2.032	-	4.061
Public Health & Public Protection	-	0.124	-	0.124
Strategy and Transformation	1.174	0.027	-	1.201
Law and Governance	0.039	-	-	0.039
Finance & Commercial	0.170	0.970	-	1.140
Cross-Council	-	-	1.000	1.000
TOTAL	5.062	4.475	1.300	10.837

- 5.9 Setting the budget and agreeing the level of Council Tax are major policy decisions for the Council. It is also the case that some individual budget savings proposals are also major Policy decisions. A full list of proposals is laid out in Appendix A.

Council – wide issues

- 5.10 Aside from the specific directorate proposals laid out in Appendices A and B there are some Council wide issues that impact on all budgets which need to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

Provision for inflation and pay awards

- 5.11 The MTFS incorporates assumptions on inflation for both expenditure and income. In the building of the 2023/24 budget no allowance was made for inflation in directorate budgets, and it was held in a Corporate Contingency budget. At its meeting of September 18th Cabinet received the Budget Management report for Quarter 1 where it was indicated that the approach would be different in 2024/25. Inflation has been based on anticipated contractual commitments where these apply, or where refusing fee uplifts could lead to yet higher prices due to provider withdrawal, a particular issue in Social Care. Most contractual commitments build in inflation at either CPI or RPI and the Government's central forecast for 2024 for

these inflationary indices has been used as appropriate. (2.9% and 3.9% respectively). The one exception has been insurance, where 5% is estimated.

- 5.12 The pay award has been assumed to be 4% in 2024/25 and 2% in later years. This year's pay award of £1,925 on grades up to NJ43, and 3.88% for grades above that, is slightly more favourable than the assumption of 6% that had been used.

Fees and Charges

- 5.13 Increases in fees and charges are determined by overall economic factors, which impact on the ability or willingness of customers to pay higher charges. The following criteria apply:
- they should aim, as a minimum, to cover the costs of delivering the service;
 - where a service operates in free market conditions, fees and charges should not distort the market, and should be set at the market rate
- 5.14 Certain fees are determined by statute. A small number of the budget proposals are based on changing fees and charges, and improving the collection of monies due to the Council.
- 5.15 Where fees and charges are not determined by statute, and are not the subject of a specific proposal in this Budget, the default has been to apply the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate in September 2023 of 6.7%.
- 5.16 The budgetary impact of fees and charges proposals is built into the figures outlined in this report. The full schedule of fees and charges is not included, but will be included in reports to The Licensing Committee and the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, in January 2024.

Contingency

- 5.17 The approach to Contingency is proposed to change from last year's approach, which includes, as mentioned above, including inflationary pressures (and other anticipated pressures) in a central Contingency budget. The approach this year has been to identify and build into Directorate budgets those anticipated pressures. Nevertheless, it is prudent to allow for a central contingency, not least because the savings proposals are so challenging. The contingency budget is proposed to be £3.5m, plus holding the budget for pay awards pending their virement once known.
- 5.18 The Contingency budget in 2023/24 will be £5.0m after distributing the pay award monies held there. The reduction of £1.5m is considered justified for two main reasons. Firstly, there is a general reserve of £20m and a budget smoothing reserve of £32m. Secondly, some £3m of the contingency in 2023/24 is for non-delivery of savings. The savings target in 2024/25 is half the savings target of 2023/24 and the approach to identifying and agreeing savings for 2024/25 has seen a greater number of internal challenge sessions, ensuring ownership of savings at officer and member level, and therefore they are more likely to be deliverable.

- 5.19 The current year's budget contained a £3m drawdown from reserves. The budget for 2024/25 contains a number of adjustments to this position, with the net result being a proposed draw down of reserves £3.523m.
- 5.20 Net interest costs show an increase of £2.7m in 2024/25. This is a combination of the costs of interest on loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), and market loans, net of interest earned on investments and from loans to Council owned companies. Although some £75m of existing loans with the PWLB need to be refinanced at substantially higher interest rates than the maturing loan, market loans are coming to an end. The net impact on borrowing costs of these changes is a pressure of £1.2m.
- 5.21 Interest earned on investment is expected to be £2.7m in 2024/25, down from this year's budget of £4.2m, a pressure of £1.5m. The impact therefore on net interest costs is a pressure of £1.7m.
- 5.22 The finance team has completely reviewed the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and increased it by £3.1m from the 2023/24 budget to reflect the latest estimates based on capital receipts and sales, including amending the treatment of prior year sales. The MRP has therefore changed from £8.6m in the original CD model to £15.8m. This year's (2023/24) budgeted MRP is £13.4m.

6 RESERVES

- 6.1 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 are subject to change. The table shows, subject to the caveat above, that there are £49.8m of reserves, of which the largest item is the Budget Smoothing Reserve which is £35.0m. In addition to the below, there are £20m of general reserves, the minimum the Council needs to set aside.
- 6.2 It should be noted that reserves can only be used once, so any use of these reserves to balance budgets in-year or through the budget setting process reduces the Council's ability to withstand financial shocks and therefore need to be carefully considered.

Table 13 Summary of Reserves

Earmarked Reserves	Balance as at 2023-24 18th December 2023
MTFS Reserve	12,403
Better Care Fund	5,207,821
Public Health Reserve	1,945,187
Public Health Contingency Funding	7,725
Proceeds of Crime POCA	171,514
Budget Smoothing Reserve	34,979,689
Redundancy / Severance Payments	7,500,000
Total	49,824,339

7 MANAGING OUR RESOURCES OVER THE MEDIUM TERM

7.1 The proposed budget has been developed and planned using the best available information and evidence. However, once the final budget has been approved at full council in March 2024, it will be important to ensure that the Council actively monitors and manages its resources. Improvements have been put in place for 2023/24 to the budget management process but further improvements in the way that the budget is actively managed are in development. These are likely to include the following additional actions:

- Member challenge on at least a quarterly basis of the delivery of savings and also growth proposals
- A line-by-line review at the end of the first quarter of the financial year of all budgets to identify further efficiencies and feed into future budget setting and in the first instance reduce reliance on one-off sources of funding
- Further improvements to our link between finance, performance and risk management in our reporting going forwards.
- Further identification of savings and efficiencies to reduce the reliance on one-off sources of funding through an annual budget challenge process and refresh of the overall Medium-term financial strategy which remains a living breathing document

8 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

8.1 Financial Implications

8.1.1 The financial implications of the draft budget are shown throughout this report. The importance of setting a legally balanced budget will eventually be a decision by full Council ahead

8.2 Legal Implications

8.2.1 Pursuant to The Local Government and Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the Council as Billing Authority is required to determine the Council Tax Base for the next financial year by 31st January 2023 and to notify other precepting authorities of the determination.

8.2.2 The Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 SI.2914, require a Billing Authority to use a given formula to calculate the Council Tax Base. This is the formula set out and followed in the appendix to this report.
1.2.3. Under paragraph 4.(2) of Part 4.3 (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure

Rules) of the Constitution, by the end of January, the Cabinet must approve, or delegate the approval of, the Council Tax Base estimates.

- 8.2.3 Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing authorities to calculate their Council Tax requirements in accordance with the prescribed requirements of that section. The function of setting the Council Tax is the responsibility of Full Council. This requires consideration of the Council's estimated revenue expenditure for the year in order to perform its functions, allowances for contingencies in accordance with proper practices, financial reserves and amounts required to be transferred from general fund to collection fund. The Council is required to make estimates of gross revenue expenditure and anticipated income, leading to a calculation of a budget requirement and the setting of an overall budget to ensure proper discharge of the Council's statutory duties and to lead to a balanced budget.
- 8.2.4 Full Council is responsible for setting the overall budget framework. However, some of the proposed savings may be subject to further analysis and decision making and as such the savings are an estimate. Individual service decisions will be subject to officer or Cabinet approval, taking account of the statutory framework, any requirement to consult and consideration of overarching duties, such as the public sector equality duty. A contingency has been set aside in the draft budget to deal with a risk that when Cabinet considers these proposals it does not agree that the savings can be met within the specific statutory framework.
- 8.2.5 On 1 December 2021 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a statutory direction requiring the Council to take prescribed actions and that certain functions be exercised from this date by appointed Commissioners, acting jointly or severally. The functions to be exercised by the Commissioners include the requirement from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the 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 to the Council in the setting of annual budgets and a robust medium term financial strategy, limiting future borrowing and capital spending. The Explanatory Memorandum to this Direction confirms that in practice most decisions are expected to be taken by the Council, however the Directions are designed to give the Commissioners the power to tackle weaknesses identified to ensure the Council is better equipped to meet the best value requirements. Cabinet must take account of the advice and comments of the Commissioners as set out in this report.
- 8.2.6 The Council has submitted a capitalisation direction to DLUHC to allow it to treat as capital expenditure certain types of revenue expenditure. The Secretary of State only permits the Council to capitalise expenditure when it is incurred, minimum revenue provision must be charged and the Council must comply with the conditions set out by DLUHC. It should be noted this the capitalisation direction is not a grant. The Council needs to fund the revenue expenditure from its own capital, including from receipts arising out of disposal of assets where these are General Fund assets.

8.3 Risk Management Implications

8.3.1 With such large reductions in budgets, there is clearly a risk that budget for 2024/25 will prove difficult to deliver and over the medium term. Balancing the budget next year, and over the lifetime of the MTFs depends on:

- Constraining growth to the proposals outlined in Table 3. The level of expenditure particularly within social care and on homelessness is subject to demand pressures which can be challenging to control.
- Delivering the savings outlined in Table 4 above absorbing within existing expenditure any emerging cost pressures
- Absorbing any new shocks from new pressures, or inflationary impacts that may occur.
- 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
- Wherever possible, identifying further efficiencies to reduce any reliance on one-off funding sources. The current model uses significant one-off sources of funding and the Council must continue to identify ongoing, sustainable reductions in cost or increases in income to reduce the reliance on these sources. The Council is also relying on exceptional support from Central Government through the use of a Capitalisation Direction which in turn relies on being funded through asset sales. The pipeline of asset sales must therefore be maintained to reduce the risk of causing further financial instability.
- That the annual contingency budget of £3.5m should only ever be used as a last resort and there should be an expectation that any variances that arise must be mitigated with on-going actions that

8.3.2 To mitigate these risks the Council is establishing

- Member challenge on at least a quarterly basis of the delivery of savings and growth proposals
- A line by line review at the end of the first quarter of the financial year of all budgets to identify further efficiencies and feed into future budget
- Moving forward with the Finance Improvement Plan
- Further improvements to our link between finance, performance and risk management in our reporting going forward

8.4 Environmental implications

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

8.5 Equality implications

8.5.1 A separate Equality Impact Assessment is included as Appendix D to this report.

8.6 Procurement implications

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

8.7 Workforce implications

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

8.8 Property implications

8.8.1 There are no specific property implications arising from this report.

APPENDIX A

2024/25 Draft Savings Schedule

Cross Council

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
<i>23/24 Proposals with 24/25 Impacts</i>			
Review of Fees and Charges	250		
Review of Strategic Commissioning	750		

Finance & Commercial

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
<i>New Proposals</i>			
Review of Finance Structure	150	50	
Review of Commercial Posts and deletion of vacant roles	20		
Improved Housing Benefit processes reducing overpayments	600	300	
Improved Housing Benefit processes reducing lost subsidy	320	300	
Increased court fees charges to reflect true costs to the council	50		
New Council Tax powers		500	
Internalise Enforcement Agent Service from 2025/26		500	
New processes to improve identification of missing Business Rates RV		500	
Reduce use of consultancy to be replaced by permanent staff		50	

Law and Governance

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
<i>New Proposals</i>			
Increase Cemeteries and Crematoria Income by more efficient use of scheduling		200	50
Review of Democratic and Electoral Services and deletion of vacant roles	39	31	

Regeneration, Housing & Environment

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
23/24 Proposals with 24/25 Impacts			
Move to fortnightly waste collections	281		
Review of public area lighting to ensure efficient usage	175		
New Proposals			
Review of Planning Services	218		
Review of Temporary Accommodation providers to ensure achieving best value		600	700
Review of Facilities Management Spend and implement efficiencies	200		
Ensure Rating Appeals are completed for vacant sites	125		
Review of office space to ensure it is efficient and fit for purpose	130		
Additional income by reviewing vacant & rented sites current charge	215		
Ensure all Insurance Charge Recovery through Service Charges	50		
Property Services New Operating Model	94	300	
Full Estate Strategy for Slough BC	0	1,400	
Energy efficiencies across all council buildings	200		
Minimising costs of holding vacant sites	91		
Explore the closure or find alternative use of The Curve		730	
Moving Traffic Violations (New Enforcement Powers)	0	200	50
Environmental Quality - Refocus on Statutory work	130		
Parks & Open Spaces - Community activity to reduce costs	100	100	
Allotments - Community partnership and pricing	50		
Waste - Reducing Costs, & Tonnage and Increased efficiencies	1,267	315	
Transfer Station and Waste Sorting Improvements	228		
Street Cleansing Improvements	71		
Chalvey Waste Amenity - operational efficiencies	50		
Review of On / Off street parking charges	220		
Review of charges for grounds maintenance to HRA properties	100		
Staged closure of Hatfield car park	51		75
Slough Town Football Club Stadium Lease	15	15	

Adults Services

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
23/24 Proposals with 24/25 Impacts			
Improved occupancy of Care Home block bed contract	34		
New Proposals			
Develop innovative technological support for residents to be more independent	300		
Develop reablement services for residents to be more independent	100		
Review fees and charges in line with national increases in social security benefits	226	244	261
Undertake a full and robust review of the Adult Social Care Fees and Charges policy	507	297	380
Review support packages transferring to Adult Services from Children's Service	214	225	236
Increased recruitment of permanent employees resulting in reduced reliance on higher cost interims	121	44	44
Remove Transformation Savings Programme consultancy support	350		
Review Direct Payment packages to ensure funded at the appropriate level	313		
Develop the Domiciliary Care market to encourage greater competition and reduce unit costs	154	19	
Public Health contribute funding towards healthy life expectancy priorities across the borough	411		

Public Health and Public Protection

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
New Proposals			
Review the Domestic Abuse Grant recharge reflects actual cost and Review Enforcement for efficiencies	124	-54	

Children's Services

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
23/24 Proposals with 24/25 Impacts			
Review of Home to School Transport - to reduce spend and ensure fit for purpose	205		
Review Education & Inclusion Staff structure	53		
New Proposals			
Capita Software Solutions – Contract savings	47		
Further savings related to Education & Inclusion staff restructure	200		
Fee Uplifts at Childrens Centres	37		

Strategy and Transformation

Description	2024/25 Saving £000	2025/26 Saving £000	2026/27 Saving £000
23/24 Proposals with 24/25 Impacts			
IT contract savings	357		
New Proposals			
Review of Internal Printing Service	36		
Proposed changes to the profile of resources in ICT&D	27	65	
New procurement of current IT contracts	701		
Removal of Senior Web Editor post in communications	40	0	
Implementation of the new Applicant Tracking System	40	80	

APPENDIX B

DRAFT PRESSURES SCHEDULE 2024/25

Description	2024/25 Pressure £000	2025/26 Pressure £000	2026/27 Pressure £000
<i>Finance & Commercial</i>			
Increase in external Audit Fees	378		
Implement out of court settlement which will reduce the amount of income achieved due to court fees	40		
Reduction in grant funding for Support to Slough Children First	115		
<i>Regeneration, Housing & Environment</i>			
Temporary Accommodation ongoing base budget pressures as the number of people requiring support has increased	1,400		
<i>Adults Services</i>			
Adult Social Care budget uplift to reflect population growth	671	683	695
Rebasing Adult Social Care budget to address structural deficit	8,126		
Support packages transferring to Adult Services from Children's Services	741	778	817
Contract extension of hostel accommodation for vulnerable adults	92		
<i>Children's Services</i>			
Revision of PFI budget to reflect contract @ 2023/4 rates	357		
<i>Strategy and Transformation</i>			
3 x data analyst posts to support council wide services	168		
Information governance and cyber security resource	128		-60
Digital Team		120	60
Increased revenue for brand new services linked to the modernisation programme (e.g. DRaaS, Backup, SIEM, Wi-Fi managed service)	628	30	-60
Equipment refresh for both back-office infrastructure (e.g., network hardware, servers, storage area networks) and end-user devices	400	-150	250
Customer Services additional temporary staff	181	-181	0
Review of the Executive Support Team	229		

APPENDIX C

CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE – 2024/25 Summary

- 1.1 The Council is required to consider and approve the calculation of the Council Tax Base which has to be calculated in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, and in the circumstances provided for in subsequent regulations, for the financial year 2024/25 it is recommended that no new locally defined discounts are created in 2024/25 and no change is made to the local Council Tax Support Scheme. Specifically, this means that:
- The Council Tax discount granted in for properties which are nobody's sole or main residence (commonly referred to as "second homes") will remain at 0%.
 - The Council Tax discount granted in 2024/25 for properties that are empty and substantially unfurnished will remain at 0%.
 - The Council Tax discount granted in 2024/25 for properties requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alterations will remain at 0%.
 - The amount of Council Tax payable for long-term empty dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 1 year will continue to attract a 100% premium. This is change to the current policy which is a period of at least 2 years.
 - The Council Tax Support Scheme will remain as an income based assessment, but with 7 Bands instead of 8.
 - The 7 bands will be based on weekly net income:
 - Band 1: No earnings/ earnings <£115.38 – 100%/ 75.00% discount
 - Band 2: 60% discount for households earning £115.39 - £184.61
 - Band 3: 40% discount for households earning £184.62 - £253.84
 - Band 4: 30% discount for households earning £253.85 - £323.07
 - Band 5: 20% discount for households earning £323.08 - £392.30
 - Band 6: 10% discount for households earning £392.31 - £461.53
 - Band 7: 0% discount for households earning £461.54 and above
- 1.3 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated as the Slough Council Tax Base for 2024/25 shall be 44,358.44

Background

- 2.1 The Council is required under the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 to classify all dwellings in the Borough into the appropriate

category of Bands A to H, according to their valuation. It must then apply the stated percentages to calculate the “relevant amount”, i.e. the number of Band D equivalent properties for 2024/25 for each valuation band. The Band D percentages to calculate the number of Band D equivalent properties is listed below:-

Band A	66.6%
Band B	77.7%
Band C	88.8%
Band D	100%
Band E	122.2%
Band F	144.4%
Band G	166.6%
Band H	200%

- 2.2 Regulation 3 of these regulations then requires the Council to multiply the “relevant amount” by the assumed collection rate, to ascertain the Council Tax Base for the year. The collection rate makes allowance for both new properties and general losses such as additional discounts and exemptions.
- 2.3 There are currently 17 different circumstances where residents are not counted for Council Tax purposes, including certain full time students, the severely mentally impaired, patients in homes and carers. Where there is only one other adult resident in the property, apart from the person who is not counted, a 25% discount will apply. Where all the adult residents are not counted, the discount is 50%.
- 2.4 There are also 21 different reasons for granting complete exemption to taxpayers, including those occupied only by full time students or those left empty by persons living elsewhere to receive care.
- 2.5 The Local Government Act 2003 provides that billing authorities have the power to grant locally defined discounts. Examples provided by the Government where a local discount may be created include as a result of local events such as flooding or natural disasters, or because of an outbreak of the foot and mouth disease.
- 2.6 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme from 31 March 2013, replacing the national scheme with a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme forms part of a billing authority’s Council Tax base.
- 2.7 For 2024/25 the cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been apportioned between the minor precepting authorities based upon the amounts of Council Tax Reduction expected to be granted in 2024/25. The reductions in Band D equivalents is 6,078.2.
- 2.8 The Council Tax Base calculation for the following financial year includes the actual Council Tax Base as at 3rd October plus an allowance for expected new properties joining the list during the 16 months ahead. Information gathered from various sources indicates that the following allowance should be made for new properties

becoming occupied during the period to 31 March 2024, equating to full year band "D" equivalents:- 1030.2.

- 2.9 The estimated Council taxbase at 3rd October is 43,776.3. The estimated taxbase for 2024/25 is therefore 44,806.5.
- 2.10 A collection rate of 99.0% has been applied to the taxbase for Council tax setting purposes. This is a value judgement based on past experience of Council Tax collection together with management information on the number of properties occupied by a single person, the number of households falling into arrears and so forth. The Council taxbase for tax setting purposes is therefore 44,358.44 for 2024/25.

Appendix D

Equality Impact Assessment (Budget 2024/25) DRAFT

Overview

- 1.1 This draft EIA describes the most significant equality pressures confronting each main service area, informed by an equality analysis. It highlights the effect of policy and governance changes; an overview of positive and neutral impacts; and a service impact overview. These outcomes are based upon spending decisions taken during the last three years and changes resulting from the 2024/25 budget. The analysis also highlights a number of cumulative impacts that may arise resulting from the 2024/25 budget.
- 1.2 It is important to note that the budget is the financial expression of the strategic plan and our operational intent, and where known, the equality impact of change is disclosed. There are also a number of individual decisions that will arise over the period of the 2024/25 budget, and these will continue to be the subject of specific and more detailed equality impact assessments in line with the Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) guidance. Political decisions will only be taken once effective and meaningful engagement has taken place on a need-by-need basis.
- 1.3 In making this decision we must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, i.e. have due regard to the need to: a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 1.4 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In addition, marital status is a relevant protected characteristic for 1.3(a)
- 1.5 The PSED is a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered and may be balanced against other relevant factors.
- 1.6 Part of the equalities governance is to ensure that equality impact assessments are undertaken when considering new and/or revised policies to inform and underpin good decision-making processes. This also helps us pay due regard to our equality obligations.
- 1.7 The Equality Act also says that public bodies must pay 'due regard' to equality. This means that we must:
 - move or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
 - take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

2. Identified high level cumulative equality impact

- 2.1 At this stage, it is not possible to fully measure the impact of the proposals on those people who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, or how the geographic spread of budget proposals will be felt across all areas of Slough.
- 2.2 However, our preliminary equality impact analysis of the planned activity and budget proposals for 2024/25 indicates that the council is focused on making a wide range of changes during 2024/25 to balance its budget and whilst the majority of identified savings through efficiencies are linked to internal systems and processes there are others that impact our external partners and neighbours.
- 2.3 Key impacts from this initial analysis across the portfolios are outlined from section 5 below.

3. Mitigating actions – our principles

- 3.1 **Monitoring of impact:** Services must ensure ongoing equalities monitoring of the Impact of service changes, to identify trends in disproportionate or unanticipated impact at an early stage to address them. This reporting should be monitored Council-wide at senior levels within the Council to identify cumulative impacts and mitigating actions. Consideration should be given to working with other partners in this monitoring and evaluation where appropriate.
- 3.2 **Informing decision-making:** The findings of this monitoring should be used to inform the budget-setting process year on year.
- 3.3 **Equality Impact Assessments:** As the budget proposals are developed, individual Equality impact assessments will be undertaken. This will include an assessment of who is likely to be impacted by the changes, whether they are considered to have 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 and if they are, what mitigation activity is proposed to ensure that they will not be disproportionately affected. These will all be reviewed to provide an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.
- 3.4 **Targeting based on need:** Resources and services should clearly identify specific needs of different groups at an early stage in order to be most effective and meet needs at first contact wherever possible e.g. through consultation.
- 3.5 **Gaps in monitoring:** Where gaps in monitoring have been identified during the equality impact assessment process, steps should be taken to fill these in the forthcoming year. This will enable better modelling of potential impacts and assessments in future.

4. Identified Positive Impacts

- 4.1 The Council is fully committed to addressing the challenges facing communities and supporting residents to live better lives. The Council is on a journey of improvement and transformation considering the challenging circumstances in which the Council finds itself. As part of this, the Council will be reviewing how the services it provides will respond to and plan for these challenges with a key focus on tackling inequalities across the Borough. The commitment to equality and inclusion is shared by partners and will be firmly rooted in the long-term vision for Slough.

4.2 The Budget for 2024/25 contributes to this in the following ways:

- By ensuring that the savings are balanced across service areas whilst recognising all service areas will need to contribute including those targeted at the most vulnerable
- By driving savings through the delivery of efficiencies and through the reform of services to improve outcomes and make them more cost effective
- By continuing to invest in services and activities that will reduce inequalities and support better lives for residents
- By being realistic about what is affordable and can be achieved within a significantly reduced resource base

5. Policy and Governance Context

- 5.1 The increase in council tax may adversely impact some residents of Slough; however, residents on the lowest incomes will remain eligible for support with their bills via the local council tax support scheme. The increase proposed from the social care precept relates to a specific social care precept that will be ring-fenced for adult social care. This should positively impact on vulnerable adults within Slough by helping to protect and improve social care services.
- 5.2 The localisation of council tax benefit (introducing new payees to council tax as a result of national policy changes) was implemented in 2013/14 alongside a scheme for hardship and investment in collection initiatives including provision of debt and welfare support. Over this time, the Council has sustained collection rates against this backdrop, ensuring no negative impact on other council taxpayers. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic we saw a reduction in collection rates. This position is now improving again and our budget proposes a continuation of the focus on collection activities for 2024/25 to maintain this trend and performance.
- 5.3 We have invested in a team within the Finance and Commercial Directorate to tackle council tax fraud across the borough. The programme:
- ensures those entitled to discounts or exemptions on their council tax are receiving the right support;
 - has introduced extensive regular reviews to ensure the levels of benefits people receive are correct;
 - encourages people to notify councils if their circumstances change, and the consequences of not doing so, to enable councils to take swift and appropriate action against people fraudulently claiming council tax benefit.
- 5.4 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the number of households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was reducing, however with the pandemic impacting household incomes, there was an increase in the number of claims received and payments made. The number of claims and households has remained steady since the pandemic due to the cost-of-living crisis. As the Council was granted the ability to apply an increase in the level of the Council Tax of up to 9.99% in 2023/24, it did so whilst also creating a more generous CTR scheme. There was a revision in the

number of CTR scheme bandings and reductions offered to residents that fall into these bandings, with more generous reductions and a new band in which no council tax was payable. This enabled the Council to help those households hardest hit. The current day pressures on local people and their household budgets are becoming greater than ever before with significant pressures on energy, fuel and high inflation affecting day-to-day living costs impacting the most vulnerable within the borough. The current CTR scheme will continue to support the most vulnerable residents in 2024/25.

6. Portfolio Impacts Overview

Overview

Equality impact assessments are being produced for all of the savings' proposals put forward as part of the draft budget process. The links to these EIAs will be updated and included in the overarching final budget EIA in February 2024.

Children Services

- 6.1 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of £0.5m for 2024/25. The main area of saving relates to the home to school transport offering, with a further saving coming from a restructure of the Education and Inclusion service.
- 6.2 The service will complete initial assessments of the equality impacts for all savings areas and determined that none of the proposals will have a negative impact from an equalities point of view. If there are any positive impacts identified for specific groups these will be monitored during the development of all proposals.
- 6.3 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken and will continue to be kept under review as the proposals are developed in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on children, young people and their families. A detailed EIA will be formalised for the final budget paper presented to Cabinet in February 2024.

Adults Services

- 6.4 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of £2.73m for 2024/25, a continuation of its Transformation Program. The priority is to operate sustainably while fully meeting legal obligations and in so doing ensure adults, carers and families have access to the information, advice and tools they need to enable them to live ordinary lives, safely and independently, for as long as possible.
- 6.5 The budget proposals will see improved value for money in continuing to meet residents' needs via an improved offer providing greater independence, improved preventative options and access to community provision.

a) Younger Adults

- i. Learning Disability – The Council aims to support individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism to ensure their needs are being met safely, whilst enabling them to achieve their outcomes and life aspirations. A refresh of the LD / Autism strategy is being undertaken to support the planning and delivery, incorporating a consultative process.

ii. Mental Health – The intention is to ensure we provide effective support for adults in the most efficient manner possible with clear pathways for stepdown and move-on to support recovery. Thus, minimising readmission and working with the wider system to better understand and manage future demand.

b) Older People

We continue to review the critical pathways that support adults going into and leaving hospital. The objective is to ensure that the adult is offered the most appropriate support for them, with an emphasis on people being enabled to return home where this is possible, with support to regain as much independence as possible. It is anticipated that this approach will enable us to both fully meet the needs of adults and continue generating efficiencies in 2024/25 and pave the way for a more sustainable operating model in future years especially in managing the anticipated increase in demand and complexities.

c) All care groups

In addition to the work set out above we will continue to work with our market (including 3rd sector partners) to develop new models for meeting need, managing the cost of care crisis and recruitment requirements to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the Council and its residents.

- 6.6 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken and will be refreshed in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on citizens accessing Adult Services. A detailed EIA of each proposal will be updated for the final budget paper in February.

Regeneration, Housing and Environment

- 6.7 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of £4.06m in 2024/25, the majority of which cover a wide range of service areas, both in terms of cost reduction and income generation. Individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken on all proposals.
- 6.8 The budget proposals identified are categorised into the main areas outlined below:
- a) Waste management – a review of the waste management contract including the challenging target to reduce tonnage. All environmental services including the street cleansing contract will be reviewed to drive out efficiencies.
 - b) In respect of transport and highways, there are several proposals – including increasing the cost of on/off street parking and closure of underutilised car parks
 - c) An up-to-date estate strategy will ensure that all buildings are fit for purpose for the council need and that running costs are providing best value for money

- d) A review of all Temporary Accommodation to ensure they are providing best value for money for the council
- e) A review of all council charges and ensuring that they are reflecting the true cost to the organisation
- f) A review of departments and restructured to fulfil all statutory work
- g) working with community groups to look after our public spaces

6.9 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual equality impact assessments have been undertaken and will be refreshed in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on citizens accessing Regeneration, Housing and Environment Services. A detailed EIA will be produced for each savings and included in the final budget paper going to Cabinet in February.

Strategy and Transformation

6.10 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of £1.2m in 2024/25, these relate to several efficiency savings across support services. These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

6.11 It is not considered that any of these savings' proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an equality impact assessment has been completed as part of the governance and decision making process for all savings and published as per the links above. A detailed EIA will be produced for each saving and be included in the final budget paper going to Cabinet in February.

Finance and Commercial

6.12 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of £1.14m in 2024/25, these relate to a number of efficiency savings across back-office services, corporate budgets and the Revenues and Benefits service. These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

6.13 It is not considered that any of these savings' proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making process for all savings and published as per the links above. Detailed EIAs are being completed for all the savings.

Law and Governance

6.14 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals for £0.039m in 2024/25 this relates to the reduction of one post in democratic services. These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

6.15 It is not considered that any of these savings' proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making process for all savings and published as per the links above. A detailed EIA will be produced for the above saving and included in the final budget paper.

Cross-Council initiatives

- 6.16 The Council has identified further budget savings proposals of £1.0m in 2024/25 relating to proposals which span more than one directorate. These are as follows:
- a) Fees and charges increases. Several fees and charges were increased in 2023/24 by up to c10%, with a smaller number which were increased by more than this level. This saving was agreed last year but due to timeliness the full year budget impact was spread over a two-year budget period.
 - b) Commissioning efficiencies – a review is being procured to assess the opportunity to drive further savings from commissioning activities, whether through looking at what is being commissioned or the way in which it is commissioned and managed.
- 6.17 It is not considered that any of these savings' proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an equality impact assessment was completed as part of the governance and decision making process for these savings in 2023/24. These will be reviewed to see if the EIAs need to be refreshed.

Other Operating Costs – Capital

- 6.18 The Council's financial position requires total borrowing to be reduced, therefore the strategy is to minimise the extent to which capital schemes require additional new borrowing. Last year several schemes were therefore removed from the programme in order to reduce the impact of the programme on the revenue budget. An EIA will be undertaken at a high level in respect of the schemes left in the programme and no adverse implications identified. A few of the schemes in the programme are for the positive benefit of certain protected groups, in particular schoolchildren and disabled adults and children and these schemes will continue while fully funded from the sources such as the Disabled Facilities Grant or the DfE capital grant.

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Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 December 2023
SUBJECT:	Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28
PORTFOLIO:	Cllr Anna Wright, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
CHIEF OFFICER:	Marc Gadsby, Executive Director People Adults
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jane Senior, Associate Director People Strategy and Commissioning Niel Niehorster, Interim of Head of Learning Disabilities and Transition
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix 2 – Learning Disability Strategy Appendix 3 – Learning Disability Strategy Consultation

1 Summary and Recommendations

This report requests approval of the Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023 - 28. The Strategy sets out how the Council, working with its partners, will seek to reduce health inequalities for adults with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and autism¹, so that more people can live a good quality of life as independently as possible within the local community. The Strategy sets out our ambitions to further join up services, with health and social care professionals working together and in an integrated way to identify solutions that improve lives.

This will be through a range of initiatives set out within the action plan.

The Strategy has been informed by engagement with people with learning disabilities, family members and professional stakeholders including providers and

¹ For brevity, the term adults with learning disabilities is used to represent both adults with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and autism. A separate Autism Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in Autumn/ Winter 2023/24.

representatives from Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Delivery of the action plan contained within the Strategy will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising people with learning disabilities, family members, the Co-production Network, Council officers and professional stakeholders including representatives of Frimley ICB. Progress against the action plan will be reported into Cabinet on an annual basis.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Slough Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28 set out at Appendix 2.
2. Note that a report will be brought back to Cabinet annually setting out the progress against the Action Plan and recommending any amendments to the Strategy.

Reason:

To ensure that a fit for purpose Adult Learning Disability Strategy with a clear action plan, and deliverables is in place.

Commissioner Review

"In implementing the comprehensive strategy the council will wish to be reassured that the excellent ambition set out in the document can be delivered within the resources that are available. Future reports on progress should address both the outcomes achieved and the effective stewardship of public money."

2 Report

Publishing the Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28 contributes to the following priorities:

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 adults.

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 Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28</p> <p>Recommended</p>	<p>Up to date Learning Disability Strategy in place which is informed by engagement with people with learning disabilities, family members and professional stakeholders.</p> <p>Implementation of action plan overseen by Steering Group comprising people with learning disabilities, family members the Co-production Network, Council officers and professional stakeholders and reported through existing Council governance arrangements.</p> <p>Opportunity to implement positive transformation of the service offered to people with learning disabilities and to further the integration of health and social care.</p>	<p>No clear disadvantage to approving and implementing the Strategy</p>
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Do not approve and implement the Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	<p>Over-stretched resource can focus upon delivering business as usual activity.</p>	<p>Missed opportunity to implement an effective strategy which is aligned to the Corporate Plan and the Slough Wellbeing Strategy and thereby supports the delivery of broader corporate objectives.</p> <p>Missed opportunity to make a positive difference to people's lives and improve services for people with learning disabilities in Slough.</p>

Background

2.0 The Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28 provides an opportunity to strengthen the offer for people with learning disabilities within the town - based upon evidence and information obtained through engagement. The Strategy sets out 7 key priorities for adults with a learning disability, aligned to Corporate Objectives. The priorities are to:

- Promote independence
- Access to good quality care and support
- Integration of Health and Social Care
- Effective transitions
- Employment, training and skills
- Evidence based and data driven approach to commissioning
- Keeping people safe.

Further detailed information concerning each of these priorities is found in Section 6 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 establishing a single point of access for health and social care, further developing the market to increase provision within the borough, developing positive behaviour support plans and ensuring early intervention for people whose behaviour challenges and enhancing the employment and retention offer for individuals. One of the key elements of the action plan is to seek to develop a more integrated and joined up offer so that individuals accessing services do not have to repeatedly tell their story and contact many different professionals within different organisations.

The Action Plan will be overseen through a Steering Group comprising people with learning disabilities, the Council and its partners with responsibility for delivering against the strategy resting with the People Strategy and Commissioning and Learning Disabilities Teams. This will have links with a newly established partnerships board which people with learning disabilities and their family members have told us that they want.

The Strategy has been shaped by engagement. Further information concerning this engagement and how this has influenced the Strategy is set out in a Consultation document at Appendix 3.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

In respect of 2023/24 the current net total budget for Adult Social Care & Public Health is a net £27.8m which includes Learning Disabilities budgets of £11.9m for support services, representing 43% of the net Directorate budget, 21% of the gross expenditure budget.

The table below sets out the Learning Disability Support Budget 2023/24.

Learning Disability Support	Budget 2023/24 £000
Adult Placement	137
Community Services – Day Care	315
Community Services - Direct Pyt	2,363
Community Services – Homecare	418
Community Services – Prof. Support	35
Community Services – Respite	10
Nursing Care	246
Residential Care - Independent	3,891
Supported Living/Group Homes	4,524
TOTAL	11,940

The Learning Disability Strategy will continue to be an integral part of Slough Borough Council's recovery journey reflecting Corporate priorities within the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25.

It is intended that implementation of the Learning Disability Strategy and Action Plan will support the Council in meeting its best value duties whilst delivering some further cost efficiencies to the Council. This will be achieved through promoting independence (for example through increasing the use of assistive technology and enabling more people to remain living at home or with the lowest necessary level of support within accommodation based provision). This is expected to result in a reduction in expenditure across residential care, domiciliary care and supported living.

Further efficiencies are expected to be achieved through progressing integration and establishing a joint health and social care offer with joint pathways. This will be dependent upon a thorough review of current activities across health and social care, including opportunities for streamlining services or consolidation. The Action Plan also references the continuation of the accommodation and support workstream as part of the existing Adult Social Care Transformation Programme which has a challenging target to deliver £650k savings built into the budget for 2023/24.

Cost efficiencies will be agreed against each of the relevant workstreams as the Steering Group takes shape. Progress will be reported into Cabinet on an annual basis so that Cabinet is sighted on progress of the action plan, risk actualisation, mitigations and delivery of efficiencies.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Care Act 2014 contains duties to actively promote wellbeing and independence and to provide services, facilities or resources to prevent, delay or reduce the need for care and support. This prevention duty is distinct from the assessment and meeting eligible needs duties. The Strategy and Action Plan set out a clear intention to further promote independence for example by supporting people with learning disabilities to self-advocate and to ensure providers have life skills training in place for their staff.

3.2.2 The Care and Support Statutory Guidance confirms that providing early support for those with learning disabilities can prevent crisis or higher need support. This includes the provision of support to family carers. Information and advice services must be provided in

a tailored manner to take account of the breadth of need. These should be developed following engagement activities and adopting a co-production approach and on a multi-agency basis involving other public bodies and the voluntary and community sectors. The Strategy has been developed in conjunction with a range of stakeholders including the co-production network and people with learning disabilities and their families. The Steering Group overseeing the implementation of the Action Plan will also be comprised of a range of individuals with learning disabilities and professional stakeholders. The Strategy tackles the need to increase opportunities to prevent crisis and the need for higher levels of support for example through piloting assistive technology and working with partners to establish crash pads. A separate Carers Strategy has also been developed and was approved at Cabinet in September 2023.

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 Learning Disabilities Strategy is a key part of supporting a distinct part of the community to improve their health.

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 action plan within the strategy.	High	<p>Recruitment to Head of Learning Disabilities as part of the Senior Management Structure.</p> <p>Continued efforts for recruitment and retention at other tiers of the Learning Disabilities Service and the Commissioning Team.</p> <p>New Commissioner for Learning Disabilities now in post.</p> <p>Timescales within the Strategy action plan adjusted to reflect potential risks and set realistic timeframes for delivery.</p>	Medium
Disruption to teams caused by Senior Management restructure.	High	Senior management structure is acknowledged as being likely to lead to some disruption in business as	Medium

		<p>usual and developmental activity.</p> <p>Timescales within the Strategy Action plan adjusted to reflect risks.</p>	
<p>Insufficient budget to support any commissioning intentions arising out of the Learning Disability Strategy Action Plan.</p>	<p>High</p>	<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> <p>Some ambitions may need to be tempered by financial constraints.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Reluctance from Partners to pursue an integrated arrangement.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Early engagement has taken place with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and Frimley ICB. Continuing discussion with partners through established forums – including the Health and Wellbeing Board and Health and Social Care Partnership Board.</p> <p>Shared understanding of risks, aspirations and barriers to integration from all relevant partners.</p> <p>Engagement of professional stakeholders from all key organisations engaged in Partnerships work to support scoping activity and oversight of delivery of the strategy.</p> <p>Analysis of good practice and understanding of benefits to Slough</p>	<p>Medium</p>

		residents on a Place basis.	
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3.4 Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications

3.5 Equality implications

It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact upon the lives of people with a disability (learning disability) by supporting individuals to live a good quality of life as independently as possible within the local community and to access joined up health and social care.

The Strategy is also likely to have a positive impact on the lives of younger adults who are transitioning to adults services, by reviewing the local market for care and support and ensure that this meets the particular requirements of younger adults who are adjusting to living as independently as possible within the community.

A full Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix 1.

4. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: People Strategy & Commissioning People (Adults)	
Service: Adults Learning Disability 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 Learning Disability 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 seek to reduce health inequalities for adults with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and autism, so that more people can live a good quality of life as independently as possible within the local community.</p> <p>The Strategy seeks to further join up services, with health and social care professionals working together and in an integrated way to identify solutions that improve lives. This includes a focus on crisis prevention, early intervention and crisis support to prevent medical intervention and hospital admission.</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 people with learning disabilities, family members, 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 people with a learning disability and indirectly their carers. An Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26 was approved at Cabinet in September 2023.</p>

Characteristic	Positive , Negative, Neutral or Unknown Impact	Rationale for Assessment
Age	Positive	The Strategy should have a positive benefit on adults, including young people who have transitioned to adults services. This includes developing the market to support younger adults.
Disability	Positive	The Strategy seeks to improve the lives of people with a learning disability by enabling them to live independently within the local community and to improve the local service offer – including joining up health and social care.
Gender Reassignment:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all individuals including those who have undertaken gender reassignment.
Marriage and Civil Partnership:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all individuals with a learning disability including people who are married / in a civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity:	Positive/	The Strategy should have a positive benefit on people with a learning disability who are pregnant or who become mothers – by improving access to an integrated offer for health and social care.
Race:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all individuals with a learning disability.
Religion and Belief:	Positive	People of any religion and belief who have a learning disability should benefit from the Strategy.
Sexual orientation:	Positive	People of any sexual orientation who have a learning disability 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 reduce health inequalities for adults with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and autism, so that more people can live a good quality of life as independently as possible within the local community.</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.</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. Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising people with learning disabilities, the co-production network, council officers, and other professional stakeholders including representatives from Frimley ICB.</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>

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).	

	Implementation of the Action Plan Oversight by a Steering Group It is also proposed that progress against the action plan is reported through the Slough Wellbeing Board.
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**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.

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:

Slough Adult Learning Disability Strategy

2023 – 2028

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1. Executive Summary

This strategy sets out our vision and priorities for adults with a learning disability in Slough from 2023 to 2028. Slough Borough Council working with partners will reduce health inequalities for adults with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and autism¹, so that more people can live well in the community and with the right support.

We believe all adults with learning disabilities in Slough should be able to reach their full potential, living as independent a life as possible within the community in which they live. This strategy aims to ensure that adults with a learning disability experience equal rights and have the same opportunities as those who do not have a learning disability.

This strategy is for people over the age of 18 who have a learning disability. A learning disability is defined by the Department of Health as a “significant reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood”. Many people with a learning disability will need support to live as independently as possible. This strategy focuses on all adults with a learning disability in Slough, considering the diversity of need from those adults with a mild learning disability to those with multiple complex needs.

Through partnership working in Slough, we are keen to continue working together with our health partners to identify solutions that improve lives with greater emphasis on crisis prevention, early intervention and crisis support to ensure people are supported before their situation becomes worse and requires medical intervention or hospital admission. We believe that the best way to achieve this is through greater integration between social care and health.

The strategy reasserts the principles of person centeredness, supporting people and their families to take control of living their lives in the way that suits them and in a setting, that is least restrictive to the person and which maximises independence, wellbeing, and healthy choices. This means refocussing on and building on peoples’ strengths, existing networks and relationships. The strategy also stresses the social model of disability and human rights and aims to remove barriers to services and organisation. An outdated view is that learning disability is something to be ‘treated’ (medical model).

This strategy sets out a vision, strategic intentions, key priorities, and action plan for adults with learning disabilities in Slough, to secure the delivery of good support from both social care and health that enables people to live independent and healthy lives. We will encourage people to take positive risks and responsibilities for managing their lives that is appropriate to their age and need (working with the relevant legal frameworks). We will continue to protect adults with learning disabilities when they are vulnerable or where there are safeguarding risks.

¹ For brevity we will use the term adults with a learning disability to cover both adults with a learning disability and adult with a learning disability and autism. A separate strategy for adults with autism is currently in development.

This Strategy represents a starting point for progressing our aspirations for more integrated services between health and social care.

Vision and Priorities for Adult Social Care

In September 2023, Cabinet and Council approved a new Corporate Plan for the town.

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.

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

The Adult Learning Disability Strategy aims to achieve the following outcomes as our refreshed priorities for 2023 – 2028. In response to legislative requirements, local strategy and knowledge and stakeholder engagement we have developed the following seven priorities:

1. Promote independence
2. Ensure access to good quality care and support
3. Progress the Integration of Health and Social Care
4. Ensure Effective transitions
5. Facilitate access to employment, training and skills
6. Embed an evidence based and data driven approach to commissioning
7. Keep people safe.

Feedback from Engagement

An engagement event took place at Observatory House in September 2023. The event was attended by people with learning disabilities, their support workers, members of the co-production network, officers from the People (Adults) Directorate and professional stakeholders. A survey was also distributed and an on-line engagement event with providers was also undertaken.

The engagement event was positive and participants broadly agreed with the seven priorities. Suggestions on actions which should be taken under each of the priority areas were also gathered and these have been used to inform the Strategy and Action Plan. Further information can be found within the Consultation Appendix to the Strategy.

The strategy will be responsive to any future changing local and national priorities including changing legislation. People with learning disabilities and their families as expert partners will be involved in having oversight of the strategy.

Feedback from Engagement

Engagement activity concerning this Strategy has identified the need to establish a partnership board to bring together people with learning disabilities and their families and carers with the key professional stakeholders and ensure that the service user voice is at the heart of service delivery.

The implementation of this Learning Disability Strategy will also be overseen through a smaller steering group comprising, officers from the People (Adults) directorate, the co-production network, people with learning disabilities and their family members and other professional stakeholders including Frimley ICB. The steering group will engage more broadly with the partnership board to ensure that they are fully updated on service developments.

Although Slough Borough Council is the lead for the Strategy, its success will undoubtedly lie in the effectiveness of the partnerships between all stakeholders.

2. Introduction

There are approximately 1.5 million people with a learning disability living in the UK with over 1.3 million in England (Mencap 2020).² According to the NHS Long Term Plan people with a learning disability face significant health inequality compared to the rest of the population and on average, die 16 years earlier than the general population – 13 years for men, 20 years for women. It is estimated that 20-30% of

² [MENCAP \(2020\)](#)

people with a learning disability also have autism³. Despite suffering greater ill-health, people with a learning disability and autism often experience poorer access to healthcare.⁴

The prevalence of learning disabilities in adults (aged 18 and over) in Slough is estimated to be 1.6% (2,561 adults), with a 0.35% prevalence (561 adults) of moderate or severe learning disabilities and a 0.1 % prevalence (137 adults) of severe learning disabilities.

The Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information System (PANSI) and Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) indicates the numbers and predicted numbers of adults aged 18+ who have learning disabilities in Slough is expected to increase in coming years. It is not expected that this increase will be significant and the projected number of people with a learning disability in Slough in 2040 is anticipated to be 2733. This means the number of adults with a learning disability that will require services from the council will also increase

Adults with moderate or severe learning disability are generally expected to be known to health and social care services. (Further information concerning population data can be found at Section 8).

For a number of years people with a learning disability have suffered inequalities, particularly those with complex needs and from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Valuing People and Valuing People Now set to redress some of those inequalities by highlighting the difficulties people with a learning disability experience in accessing personalised care and support that would allow them to exercise choice and control over their own lives. Although these documents were written some time ago now, these were landmark documents of national importance and much of what they highlight is still relevant.

The Six Lives Report and Death by Indifference⁵ also highlighted the need for change, ensuring we work together to identify issues, and that staff are adequately trained to meet individual needs. A lot of changes have taken place since these reports were published, for example specialist learning disability nurses being available in most hospitals. Safeguarding procedures have been strengthened and LeDeR reviews (Learning Disability Mortality Review) are undertaken. Under the Transforming Care Programme (triggered by abuse at Winterbourne View) we now see fewer people going into specialist hospitals, or if they are admitted they have far shorter stays than previously. We have come far, but we know we can do more for our community. This strategy aims to set in motion those improvements and build upon the work already undertaken.

In 2020, the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR)⁶ found that people with learning disabilities continue to die prematurely – and although there are some early signs of improvements, there are still considerable differences compared

³ [Emerson, E. & Baines, S. \(2010\) The Estimated Prevalence of Autism among Adults with Learning Disabilities in England. Improving Health and Lives: Learning Disabilities Observatory](#)

⁴ [The NHS Long Term Plan](#)

⁵ [Six Lives: Progress Report on Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities](#)

⁶ [Learning Disabilities Mortality Review Programme \(LeDeR\). 2020](#)

to the general population with 63% of people with learning disabilities dying before reaching the age of 65, compared to 15% in the general population.

In Slough, early and sustained action is required to address the inequalities faced by adults with learning disabilities. We have developed seven priorities: Promoting independence; access to good quality care and support; integration of health and social care; effective transitions; employment, training and skills; evidence based and data driven approach towards commissioning; and keeping safe.

3. Our Vision

Adults with a learning disability in Slough will be empowered to have more choice and control and will live safe, good, healthy and fulfilled lives as part of their community. They will have the right support at the right time to achieve their full potential.

As part of this vision and service offer, we aim to ensure that all adults with a learning disability in Slough have:

- The right to the same opportunities as anyone else to live satisfying and valued lives
- The right to be treated with dignity and respect
- More choice and control in key decisions in their lives
- A suitable home within their community
- Good access to health services,
- Opportunity to develop and maintain relationships and get the support they need to live a healthy, safe and fulfilling life.

This strategy sets out how we will deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for adults with a learning disability, and bridge the gaps in learning disability service provision in our local area.

4. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out Slough's five-year strategy for improving support and experience for adults living with a learning disability who access our local services, and how services needed by adults with a learning disability will be provided in the future.

A review of the Learning Disabilities Service was undertaken between January 2023 and September 2023 by an experienced learning disabilities consultant.

The review found that a number of areas are currently working well in respect of services provided by the health and social care teams. This includes multi-disciplinary work, joint assessments and screening and joint care planning in many instances. However, the review also found that lack of a clearly defined integrated offer detracts from the quality of service which can be delivered. For example, the lack of a single point of access means that people with learning disabilities and their families often have to try and contact different professionals from different teams, in

different locations and different organisations – to access appropriate health and social care. This absence of clear joint pathways, common assessment and eligibility criteria and clearly defined core functions of key professionals, mean that there is duplication in the system with too many hand-offs taking place. For this reason, the scoping of an integrated service offer is contained within the action plan at Section 25.

Feedback from Engagement

A need for better partnerships working, improved access to information and advice and advocacy services were also highlighted as important during the engagement. Improvements in transitions planning were also considered necessary, along with better access to training, employment and independent living opportunities. Widespread adoption of easy read information among professionals was viewed as being necessary for better communication with people with learning disabilities.

These areas are addressed within the action plan at Section 25

This strategy and action plan have been developed to respond to the issues that have been highlighted locally and outline how everyone across the system can work together to improve the lives of adults with learning disabilities and strengthen existing services.

By improving and redesigning services where necessary, we will enable adults with a learning disability in Slough to enjoy independence, live as close to home as possible in communities where they feel valued, to enjoy and have purpose to how they spend their time and to contribute to the local neighbourhood.

Slough Borough Council is committed to improving services for adults with learning disabilities 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 adults with learning disabilities is fit for the future. Our priorities will inform the design of future support and developments and set out what we will concentrate our resources on to ensure quality services and improved health and wellbeing of adults with learning disabilities.

We will monitor and measure the success of this strategy through the accompanying Action Plan.

5. Definition of a Learning disability

According to Eric Emerson and Pauline Heslop⁷ in their paper: “A working definition of Learning Disabilities” (2010), learning disability includes the presence of:

- a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with;

⁷ [A working definition of Learning Disabilities](#)

- a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning);
- which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.

Examples of this would be difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life. People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people.⁸ (Mencap). With the correct support most people with a learning disability can lead independent lives. The collective term of learning disability overshadows the person which may lead to their health needs both physical and mental not being identified and met fully.

6. Our Priorities

We have identified seven priority areas for adults with learning disabilities in Slough:

1. Promoting independence

Adults with a learning disability, and their parents and carers will be able to access good information and advice on what is available to them within the community along with access to advocacy services. We will provide life skills training for adults with a learning disability and look to work with our partners and the community to improve access to existing community resources and facilities to meet their needs. We will have a focus to ensure adults with a learning disability are safe in the community.

2. Access to good quality care and support

We will ensure that adults with learning disabilities can lead fulfilling and independent lives. Learning disabilities can have a significant impact on a person's ability to learn, communicate, and carry out daily activities. Therefore, appropriate support is necessary to help them overcome these barriers and reach their full potential whilst adopting a person-centred approach.

Feedback from Engagement

The engagement event at Observatory House highlighted that carers for people with learning disabilities are lifelong carers and they should be valued in their caring roles. The Council has recently adopted a new Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26 which seeks to ensure that Carers in Slough are able to balance their caring responsibilities with maintaining their quality of life. Reference to the Carers Strategy is made within the action plan to this Strategy so that there is a clear read across between the two.

⁸ [Learning disabilities: Our definition | Mencap](#)

3. Integration of health and social care

Working alongside health colleagues, our aspiration is to progress an integrated offer for people with learning disabilities. We will work together to reduce health inequalities for adults with a learning disability and autism in Slough. This includes increasing the number of adults with a learning disability who access their annual health checks, screening checks and other health checks.

4. Effective transitions

The planning for young people with a learning disability and autism for adulthood will start at a much earlier stage. Their views will be listened to and acted upon, enabling young people to make choices about their future. There will be an embedded culture of the 'presumption of achievement' for all people with a learning disability and autism, where positive risk taking to build resilience is the norm.

Feedback from Engagement

The need for more effective transitions planning was confirmed during engagement on this Strategy. Better opportunities for networking for parents of young people and younger adults with a learning disability is something which would be welcomed, along with the opportunity to engage with key professionals from Children's and Adults Services and the Housing Department. The arrangement of this type of event is included in the action plan.

5. Employment, training and skills

Working together, we will raise aspirations in terms of what can and should be achieved in relation to employment, training and skills for adults with a learning disability in Slough. We will promote the employment, skills and training opportunities available. We will work with local service providers and businesses to increase the range and nature of skills and training opportunities available across pathways, sector and qualifications, ensuring the support to individuals, their families and carers meets need and secures appropriate outcomes to access employment.

Feedback from Engagement

Better access to training, employment and skills development for adults with learning disabilities was identified as an area requiring improvement during engagement. Developing an effective offer will require a cross-council approach with officers from areas such as the Commercial, Economic Development and Organisational Development to establish links with local businesses and other organisations in order to support this. Further information is contained within the action plan.

6. Evidence based and data driven approach towards commissioning

We will make decisions about service provision based on sound evidence and reliable data. This will ensure that services are responsive to the needs of the local population and deliver positive outcomes for adults with learning disabilities.

7. Keeping safe

Taking appropriate measures to keep adults with learning disabilities safe requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account their unique needs and challenges. We will provide them with the necessary education, support, and resources to help them stay safe and protected from harm.

Feedback from Engagement

Engagement identified the need to widen awareness of safeguarding issues among family members and the general public as well as professionals working with people with learning disabilities. This is addressed through the action plan.

7. Policy Guidance: National and Local Context

National context

There have been several key documents and policies published nationally related to learning disability:

- The Equality Act (2010) is a legal framework to protect the rights of people with protected characteristics, including disability.
- Care Act (2014) outlined the requirements for adult social care provision
- Valuing People (2001) was the seminal policy document outlining the Government's approach to learning disability, followed by the publication of Valuing People Now in 2009. Both focus on the fact that "all people with a learning disability are people first with the right to lead their lives like any others, with the same opportunities and responsibilities, and to be treated with the same dignity and respect". Both policies place four principles – rights, independence, choice and inclusion – at the heart of action to improve the lives of people with a learning disability.
- In May 2011, the BBC's Panorama programme revealed the emotional and physical abuse of adults with a learning disability by staff working at the private Winterbourne View Hospital in South Gloucestershire, resulting in the Department of Health publishing Transforming Care: A national response to

Winterbourne View Hospital in December 2012⁹. The report focused on the need for community-based care for people with a learning disability and expectations for a “substantial reduction in reliance on inpatient care for these groups of people”, with a rapid reduction in the number of hospital placements and the closure of inpatient services. Nevertheless, multiple subsequent reports highlighted slow progress towards the Government’s goal of moving people with a learning disability out of hospitals and into the community.

- In 2015, a national plan Building the Right Support¹⁰ set out a plan to improve health and care services so that more people can live in the community, with the right support, and close to home. It was developed to close inpatient facilities and develop community services for people with a learning disability, to be delivered through 49 Transforming Care Partnerships (TCPs). TCPs brought together local authorities, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), NHS England, service providers, the voluntary sector and service users and their families to develop a three-year transformation plan for their local area. The Government’s mandate to NHS England 2018-2019 included the objective of improving out-of-hospital care for people with a learning disability, focusing on the need for better prevention, early intervention and access to integrated services, together with reducing inappropriate out-of-area placements and reliance on inpatient care.
- Sir Stephen Bubb “The Building Rights report”¹¹ May 2021, which is an independent review of services for autistic people and people with a learning disability in Bristol makes three key recommendations to help services and systems become more aware and have a better understanding of the challenges faced by autistic people and people with a learning disability. The report's recommendations are:
 - Establish a ‘Charter of Rights’
 - Ensure a ‘Right to Challenge’
 - Establish an independent commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability.
- The NHS Long Term Plan¹² was published in 2019, outlining the ambitions of the NHS over the next 10 years and including learning disability as one of its four clinical priorities. This includes improving community-based support, reducing the number of people with a learning disability in hospital settings and reducing health inequalities through a focus on increasing uptake of annual health checks and reducing overmedication of children and young people with a learning disability.
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Right support, right care, right culture guidance (May 2022)¹³ sets out how CQC regulates providers supporting autistic people and people with a learning disability.

⁹ [Transforming Care: A national response to Winterbourne View Hospital \(December 2012\)](#)

¹⁰ [Building the Right Support \(2015\)](#)

¹¹ [Sir Stephen Bubb “The Building Rights report” \(May 2021\)](#)

¹² [The NHS Long Term Plan \(2019\)](#)

¹³ [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) Right support, right Care, right culture guidance \(May 2022\)](#)

- Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper¹⁴, (published 15th March 2023), sets out the government's proposals to help more disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work.
- The National Disability Strategy (July 2021)¹⁵ sets out the actions the government will take to improve the everyday lives of all disabled people.
- The People at the Heart of Care White Paper (December 2021)¹⁶. The white paper sets out a 10-year vision for care and support in England and is based around three key objectives:
 1. People have choice, control and support to live independent lives
 2. People can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support
 3. People find adult social care fair and accessible
- In June 2018, NHS Improvement (NHSI) published its Improvement Standards for NHS Trusts¹⁷. The NHSI National Standards have been developed with a number of outcomes created by people with learning disabilities and their families. These clearly state what is expected from the NHS. By taking this approach to quality improvement, it places patient/service user and carer experience as the primary objective, as well as recognising the importance of how the NHS listens, learns and responds in order to improve care.
- The NHSI standards also reflect the strategic objectives described in national policies and programmes, in particular those arising from Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities Next Steps (2016)¹⁸ and Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme (2015)¹⁹.

Local context

The Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023 – 2028 is based upon collaboration, learning and developing a Slough shared approach to service provision and commissioning where this makes sense. This strategy links closely with a number of other programmes of work, and should be considered in context.

This strategy is written with regard to the following local strategies:

- Slough Corporate Plan 2023-26²⁰
- Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25 ²¹ (currently being refreshed)
- Slough Health and Care Plan²²

¹⁴ [Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper \(March 2023\)](#)

¹⁵ [The National Disability Strategy \(July 2021\)](#)

¹⁶ [People at the Heart of Care White Paper \(December 2021\)](#)

¹⁷ [The learning disability improvement standards for NHS trusts \(June 2018\)](#)

¹⁸ [Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities – Next Steps. 2016](#)

¹⁹ [Learning Disabilities Mortality Review \(LeDeR\) Programme](#)

²⁰ [Appendix A - Doing right by Slough - Corporate Plan 2022-2025.pdf](#)

²¹ [Slough Wellbeing Strategy, 2020 – 2025](#)

²² Slough Health and Care Plan²² [PowerPoint Presentation \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

It is also written with regard to the following national guidance:

- Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes ²³
- Strategic and Collaborative Planning and Commissioning²⁴
- Shifting the Centre of Gravity, making place based, person centred health and care a reality.²⁵
- The Better Care Fund Framework 2022-23²⁶

8. Population Data

The prevalence of learning disabilities in adults (aged 18 and over) in Slough is estimated to be 1.6% (2,561 adults), with a 0.35% prevalence (561 adults) of moderate or severe learning disabilities and a 0.1 % prevalence (137 adults) of severe learning disabilities.

The following table, from the Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information System (PANSI) and Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) indicates the numbers and predicted numbers of adults aged 18+ who have learning disabilities in Slough. The data indicates an expected increase in numbers of adults with learning disabilities in coming years.

Adults with moderate or severe learning disability are generally expected to be known to health and social care services.

Table 1: Slough LD population data (2020)

Age range (years)	All learning disability	Moderate or severe learning disability	Severe learning disability
18-24	289	67	22
25-34	510	110	31
35-44	660	166	45
45-54	455	103	23
55-64	321	70	16
65-74	192	31	No data
74-84	95	10	No data

²³ [Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes - a commissioning framework | Local Government Association](#)

²⁴ [Strategic Collaborative Planning and Commissioning](#)

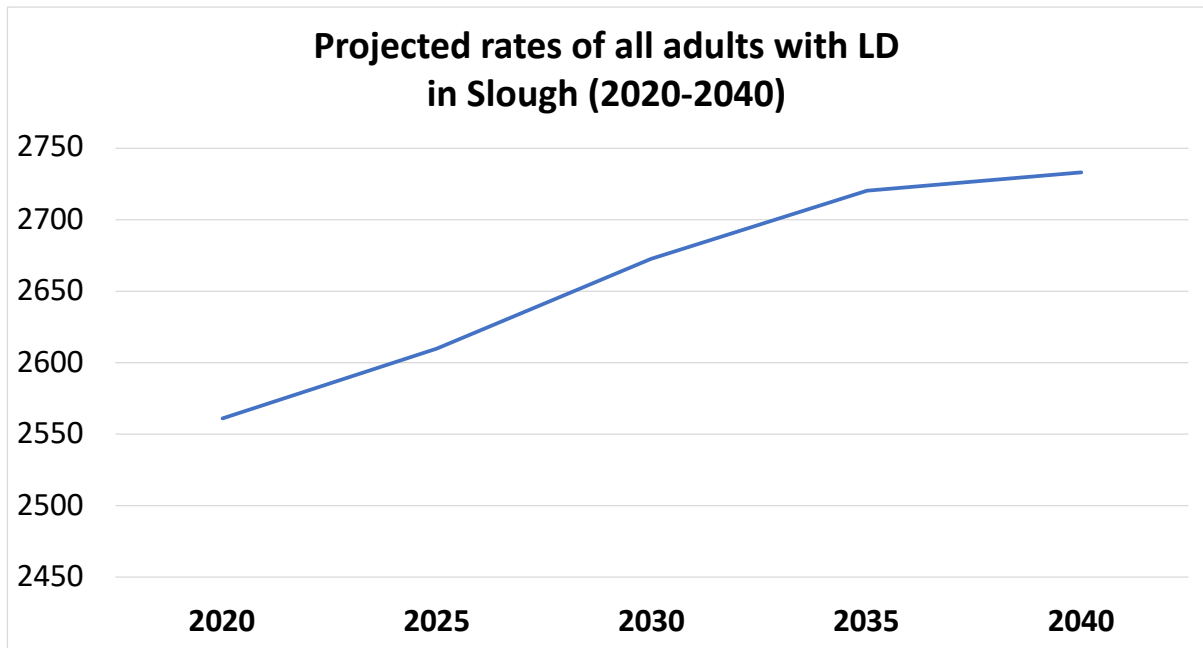
²⁵ [Shifting the Centre of Gravity, making place based, person centred health and care a reality.](#)

²⁶ [Better Care Fund Framework 2022-23](#)

85+	39	4	No data
Total	2561	561	137

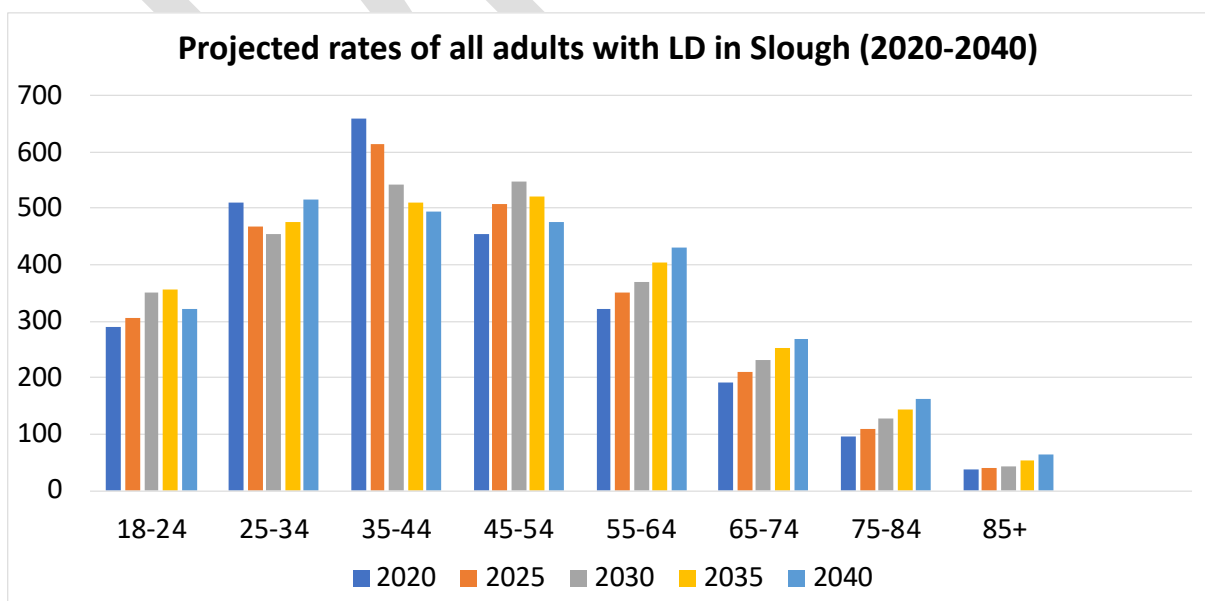
Source: PANSI / POPPI. 18 years and above estimated to have a learning disability in Slough in 2020, by age

Figure 1: Projected rates of all adults with LD (2020-2040)



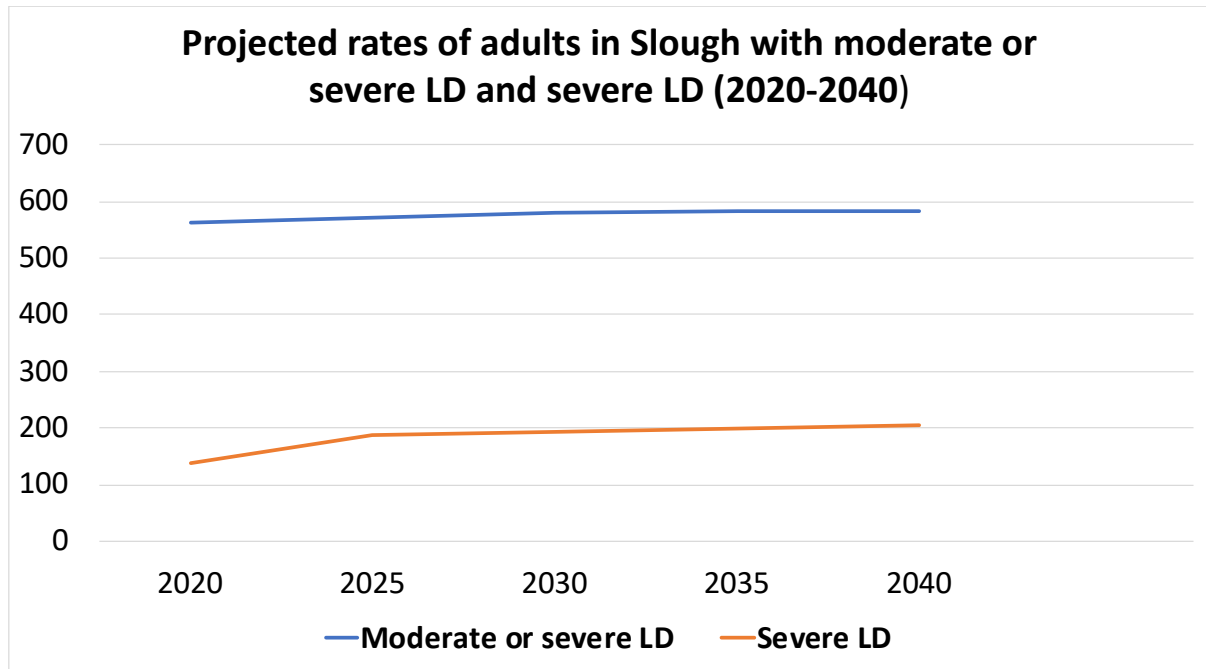
Data source: PANSI and POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

Figure 2: Projected rates of all adults with LD by age range (2020-2040)



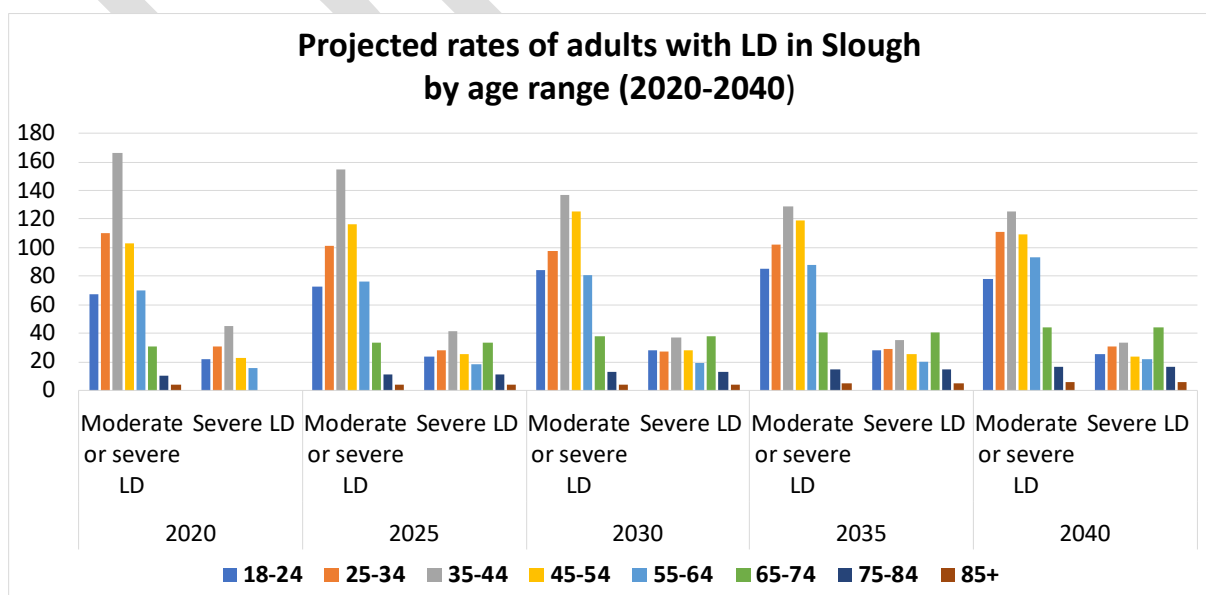
Data source: PANSI and POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

Figure 3: Total projected rates of adults by type of LD



Data source: PANSI/POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

Figure 4: Projected rates of adults with moderate or severe LD and severe LD by age range



Data source: PANSI/POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

As the general population of Slough increases, it is likely that the number of people with a learning disability requiring services from the council will also increase although this is not expected to be significant. Among adults the number of service users in 2040 is anticipated to be 2733. This means the number of adults with a learning disability that will require services from the council will also increase.

Table 2: Number of service users receiving long-term support from Slough Borough Council (as of 23 March 2023)

Long-term support received	No. of open CPLs	No. of Sus
Accommodation Based Support	1	1
Additional Support	6	6
Adult Placement	2	2
CHC	1	1
Day Care	46	38
Direct Payments	135	125
Home Care	58	49
Live In Care	3	3
Nursing LT	7	7
Other	6	6
PB	13	13
Professional Support	27	26
Replacement Care	1	1
Residential Health Funded	1	1
Residential LT	54	53
Residential Respite	6	6
Residential ST	1	1
Supported Living	178	104
Telecare	1	1
Grand Total	547	364

Comparing the figures within Table 1 – the projected need, and Table 2 the number service users receiving long-term support from the Council, it is very likely that there is much higher need within the community than that which is being met with through adult social care.

9. Transforming Care – Mental Health Inpatient Admissions

Reducing inpatient admissions and length of stay

Adults with a learning disability and autism are up to five times more likely to be admitted to hospital than the general population and will spend longer as an inpatient

than other groups – including those with severe mental illness but without an autism or a learning disability²⁷.

Inpatient admissions for individuals with learning disabilities and autism in Slough can occur for a variety of reasons, including behaviours that challenge, medical conditions, and a need for specialist care and support. Inpatient admissions can have a significant impact on an individual's life, as well as the lives of their families and carers, and it is important to ensure that these admissions are necessary, appropriate, and in the best interests of the individual. Our plan is to stop people ending up in hospitals and assessment and treatment units in the first place.

Slough has low rates of inpatient hospital admissions when compared to the national average. Given the specific data on inpatient admissions may vary depending on the time period and the source of information, as of March 2023, there are 4 adults with learning disabilities and autism in an inpatient hospital. Three (3) of these patients are funded by the NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) and one (1) patient is funded by NHS England.

Our strategy sets out how we will reduce the number of inpatient admissions for individuals with learning disabilities and autism in Slough, focus on strengthening community-based support and services and the provision of adequate housing and support for independent living, as well as access to specialist healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. We will continue working with healthcare providers to ensure that individuals with learning disabilities and autism receive appropriate and effective treatment for any underlying medical conditions proactively.

We will continue sharing of up-to-date, accurate and timely information on inpatient admissions between NHS Frimley ICB and Slough Council.

10. Dynamic Support Register (DSR)

The Dynamic Support Register (DSR) is a register of people with learning disabilities and autism who may need higher input from services and who may be at risk of being admitted to a specialist or mental health hospital. The Register helps local support teams to identify those who would benefit from a Care (Education) and Treatment Review (C(E)TR). Each local borough holds a register for adults and one for children's and young people.

We will work closely with our health partners to ensure individuals with learning disabilities and autism should be added to the register if they meet one or more of the criteria that can put them at a higher risk of being admitted.

We are aware of the new Dynamic Support Register (DSR) policy²⁸ published by NHS England on 25th of January 2023, which aims to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions for people with a learning disability and/or autism. The policy includes new guidance on the implementation of dynamic support registers and updates to

²⁷ [People with a learning disability, autism or both Liaison and Diversion Managers and Practitioner resources \(2019\)](#)

²⁸ [Dynamic support register and Care \(Education\) and Treatment Review policy and guide](#)

the Care (Education) and treatment reviews. The new guidance will support local health and social care services to better understand the needs of people with a learning disability and/or autism, so that can services make sure people receive the right support in the local area. By understanding people's needs and recognising early signs that might lead to a crisis it means that extra support can be put in place quickly, so the person doesn't end up going into hospital (or to other out of area placement) unnecessarily.

In Slough, we will strengthen our understanding of the needs of people with learning disabilities and autism and work together to improve their health and wellbeing. We are therefore preparing for the changes for full implementation of the new DSR policy by 1st of May 2023 and, we will ensure systems are in place with our health partners for regular DSR meetings in line with the new policy, which will be led by NHS Frimley ICB.

11. Crisis Support in the Community

It is relatively common for people with a learning disability to develop behaviour that challenges, and more common for people with more severe disability. Prevalence rates are around 5–15% in educational, health or social care services for people with a learning disability. Some adults with learning disabilities are at risk of admission to inpatient care due to the presence of such behaviours if they are not successfully managed in the community. There are ongoing concerns that these individuals are subject to increased rates of hospitalisation, unnecessary long-term use of psychotropic medication, poorer health, abuse, and exclusion.

Good practice guidance around the commissioning of services for people with a learning disability and autism who display behaviour that challenges, including the 1993 and 2007 Mansell reports²⁹, describe the need to develop high quality local services that understand and support people, and reduce the reliance on out-of-area placements. **Intensive Support Teams (IST)** are recommended to provide high quality proactive and responsive care aimed at avoiding unnecessary admissions or reducing inpatient length of stay and supporting people in the community.

What we offer in Slough

Development of robust support for people with a learning disability and autism in times of crisis has been a requirement since the publication of Building the Right Support in 2015, and is a key part of the NHS Long Term Plan. It is expected that Integrated Health and Social Care Partners have systems in place to ensure:

- That people with a learning disability and autism people have access to specialist support out of hours when experiencing a mental health crisis, or other circumstances that may place them at risk of admission to a mental health hospital; and

²⁹ [J. Mansell, Services for People with Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviour of Mental Health Needs \(1993\), and revised edition \(2007\)](#)

- That people with a learning disability and autism have access to support with behaviours that challenge the service.

For our Slough population, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides an Intensive Support Team (IST) for people with a learning Disability and autism who may also present with challenging behaviour. This service operates during working hours from Monday to Friday and, provides out of hours telephone support.

There is an established eligibility criteria and referral pathway into the service. Referrals made to the IST are triaged and are mostly assessed within 24-48 hours using a Risk Matrix (People who Behaviour Challenges Risk Matrix) in accordance with the operational policy. The IST gets involved with people who presents with risks pre and post-discharge from hospital, when hospital admissions had been unavoidable.

In April 2018 NHS England (NHSE) launched the STOMP (Stop the Over Medication of People with a learning disability, autism or both)³⁰ drive urging doctors and other professionals to sign up to a national pledge to STOMP. The goal is to improve quality of life by reducing the potential harm of inappropriate psychotropic medication, this includes being used wholly inappropriately as a 'chemical restraint' to control challenging behaviour, or in place of other more appropriate treatment options. NHSE have urged all GPs to lead a medication review of all people with a learning disability, autism or both, with a view to implementing a planned supervised dose reduction and stopping of inappropriate psychotropic drugs.

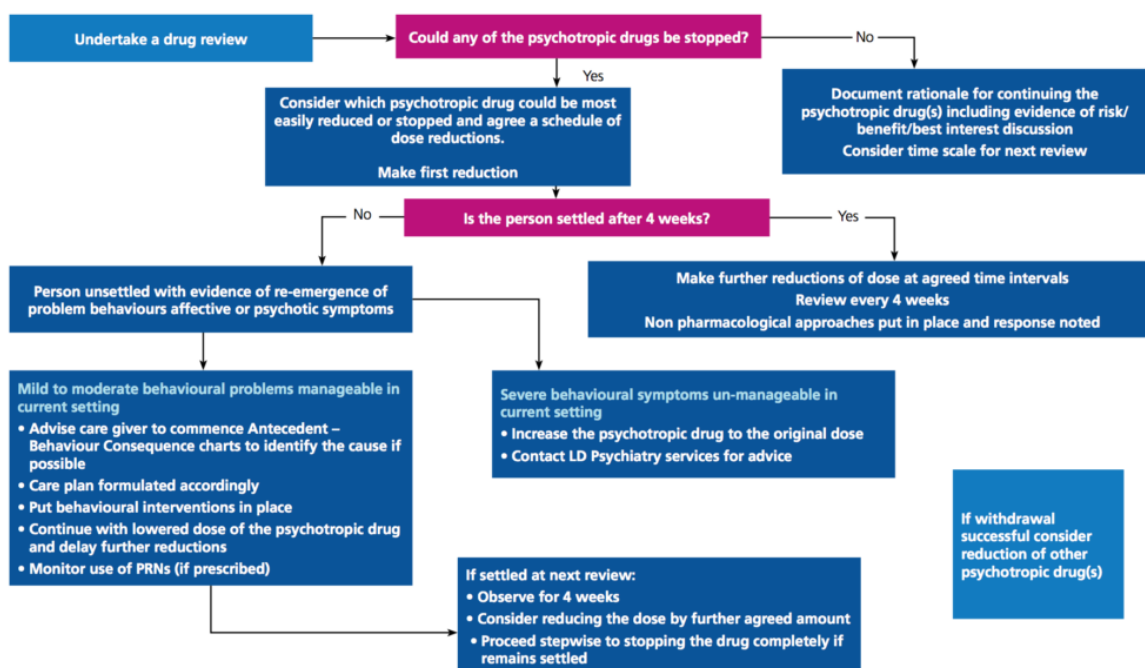
We are committed to STOMP. Staff supporting adults with learning disability and autism in Slough have attended STOMP training and are fully aware of STOMP. The CTPLD is working with GPs on this initiative and we will monitor evidence in the reduction of use of psychotropic medications via psychiatry outpatient reviews.

NHS England has issued guidance specifically aimed at reducing inappropriate psychotropic drugs in people with a learning disability in general practice and hospitals. The summary algorithm is represented below and provides a succinct summary of how to proceed.

Figure 5: NHS England Algorithm for reducing and stopping psychotropic drugs

³⁰ [Stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both \(STOMP\) | NHS England](#)

Algorithm for the review, reduction or stopping of psychotropic drugs in People with a Learning Disability



Source: NHSE

Table 3: Community Learning Disabilities Team (CTPLD) Workforce

Current CTPLD Staffing	Gaps
Team manager	Behaviour Support Specialists
Clinical psychologists x 3 (working across Berkshire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour specialist functions are currently undertaken within the team by clinical psychologists and Learning Disability nurses trained in positive behavioural support (PBS)
Occupational Therapist x 1	Art Therapists
Learning Disability Nurses x 2 (Slough only)	
Physiotherapist x 1 (Slough only)	
Social workers x 6	
Social Work assistants x 2	
Speech and Language Therapist x 1	
Learning Disability Nurses x 2 (Slough only)	
Health support worker x 1	
Lead practitioner x 1	
Consultant psychiatrist x 1	
Admin / Business Support (sits with Health not Slough Council)	

Intensive Behaviour Support

A number of interventions are in place to support with behaviours that challenge the service, however gaps in the IST offer do remain. Adults who meet the criteria for the CTPLD do not

have access to full time behavioural specialists who are able to carry out a functional behaviour analysis and develop a positive behaviour support plan for our service users in Slough. This offer is not currently available and it is being covered by clinical psychologist and learning disability nurses within the team. This current 'resource' has limited capacity to provide intensive support conducting behavioural assessments and hands on support for staff implementing the positive behaviour support plan (PBS) There is also no resource available to train families and professionals in positive behaviour support. The need for development of the Behaviour Support Offer is addressed within the Action Plan.

Identified areas for investment

- **Behaviour Support Specialists and Behaviour Support Assistants**

In order to meet the requirements of Building the Right Support and the NHS Long Term, Slough Borough Council alongside our integrated health partners, will be investing in a small intensive behaviour support resource to provide practical, 'hands on' support for adults with a learning disability and autism and the people who support them.

We will work with our health partners to develop the intensive behaviour support offer and recruit behaviour specialists and behaviour support assistants, to focus on community based support, early intervention and providing support that will follow service users / patients.

The focus of the intensive behaviour support offer will be placed on early intervention and community support. Identified need is greatest for adults with a learning disability and autism in the 'amber' category of dynamic support registers, who would benefit from support before reaching crisis point. The ability to follow the patient and provide support during crisis, in an inpatient setting, and support upon discharge is critical; this means that if admission cannot be avoided the individual will have consistent and familiar support throughout the process.

We will ensure the intensive behaviour support offer reflects feedback from families and providers supporting people in the community who display behaviours that challenge and, ensure 'hands on' support and modelling is provided in the service users' own home. The behaviour support will also reduce the unnecessary use of physical intervention.

It is expected that the new posts will receive dedicated specialist training sourced from a reputable resource. We will recommend to our health partners that the training offer be extended to the rest of the Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team (CRHTT), to encourage upskilling and further development of the mainstream offer where possible.

- **Crash Pad**

As part of our ongoing partnership working, we will seek investment and realignment of resources toward additional community solutions such 'crash pad' facilities. These

are emergency crisis beds to give people with a learning disability and autism somewhere to go when they need extra support. This means that they don't have to go into hospital. This option also includes access to a reduced number of hospital beds when absolutely necessary and when all other least restrictive arrangements have been exhausted.

'Crash pad' facilities would accommodate and support individuals in crisis where previously hospital admission may have been an option. The 'crash pad' will be designed for when a person's existing placement breaks down, accommodate and support individuals during crisis and can take referrals at very short notice.

The establishment of a 'crash pad' facility in support of crisis in the community would complement the investment in Positive Behavioural Support training to upskill the workforce to better meet need and acuity in the community.

Providers will need to demonstrate innovative ways of supporting people that may challenge in community settings including alternative to admission responses ie 'crash pad' facilities.

12. Our Provider Workforce

To deliver Slough aspirations for people with a learning disability, the health and care sector will need to be resilient and demonstrate the skills required to deliver appropriate services. We will therefore work with local providers to help them plan for a future workforce including necessary training for care and support staff. We will build these requirements into service specifications for the commissioning of new services and offer any additional support with training where this is financially available.

The workforce key competencies are likely to include:

- Learning disability awareness; and the requirement to implement reasonable adjustments to services.
- Recognising that people with a learning disability and autism may require additional support communicating and distress from not being able to communicate will result in behaviours that can challenge services.
- Understanding and recognition that autism and having a learning disability are disabilities and not mental health conditions.
- Skills in positive behaviour support (PBS)
- Ability to apply the Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Decisions.

Adoption of these workforce key competencies will help reduce placement breakdown and emergency crisis hospital admission.

Engagement with the provider sector is considered as part of the action plan.

13. Physical Health Inequalities and Annual Health Checks

Health inequalities

People with a learning disability and autism experience significant health care related inequalities; die younger, are more likely to be admitted to hospital than the rest of the population, and more likely than other groups to experience delays in receiving a diagnosis.³¹

The causes of inequalities in healthcare are well recorded³² and include:

- Diagnostic overshadowing, where all ill health physical or mental, is attributed to their disability – leading to delayed or misdiagnosis.
- Poor access to screening, early intervention, and treatment services, because reasonable adjustments are not put in place.
- Poor co-ordination of care planning for individuals with complex physical and mental health needs.
- Lack of robust transition planning for young people moving into adult services.
- Absence of annual health checks
- Poor understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Decisions.

Annual Health Checks

The NHS Long Term Plan set an ambition that by 2023/24, at least 75% of people aged 14 or over with a learning disability will have had an annual health check. Performance in 2020-21 has been impacted by multiple factors, particularly COVID-19 and it is important to consider other novel ways of improving both uptake and quality.

The trajectory for 2022/23 completed health checks in Slough is 59.88% as of December 2022. People with learning disability in Slough get support with reasonable adjustments to complete their health checks and vaccinations as appropriate. Health action plans (HAPs) are produced to support good care coordination. 87% of individuals in Slough have health action plans. The GP QOF Register is reviewed and updated regularly which is led by our health partners. There are further discussions around integration to strengthen our relationships with our health partners.

Increasing health checks is built into the action plan.

³¹ [Better health and care for all Health and care services for people with learning disabilities | February 2020](#)

³² [LeDeR Programme at University of Bristol - Findings and Annual Reports - 2015-2021](#)

14. Learning Disability Mortality (LeDeR) Reviews

LeDeR is an important piece of work for the Community Team for People with a Learning Disability (CTPLD), Local Authority and indeed the Safeguarding Adults Partnership. It's acknowledged that there is a great deal of learning to be gained from the reviews both in relation to areas requiring some work and the promotion of exemplary practice.

In light of the learning from the reviews, we will ensure that the process is as seamless as it can be. We have agreed we would create the following:

- Devise and circulate information gathering pathway in Slough which includes an escalation point to avoid delays.
- Information gathering pathway to acknowledge requests made to providers and respective escalation points.
- Create an awareness raising opportunity at a multi-disciplinary CTPLD level, perhaps via a session from a LeDeR reviewer.
- Use this as an opportunity to recruit reviews (consider a "how we can support you in your role" note, i.e. buddying, joint review, peer support session, protected time to complete, etc.). This will be required following the broadening of the LeDeR remit to include people with autism.

We are confident that the above will greatly assist in complimenting what arrangements are already in place for governance and information sharing, whilst also engaging front facing staff in Slough. Developmental work concernin LeDeR is contained within the action plan.

15. Assessment and Diagnosis

The importance of accurate and timely assessment and diagnosis of individuals with learning disabilities and autism cannot be overemphasised. This strategy includes an overview of the current process for assessment and diagnosis, and recommendations for how to improve the system, such as streamlining the process, increasing access to specialised services, and providing training for healthcare professionals.

In Slough, there is an established system for assessing and diagnosing individuals with learning disabilities but not for autism diagnosis, given that some people have both a learning disability and autism diagnosis as stated in the evidenced-based literature. Our Strategy for Adults with Autism 2023-2028 addresses our resource provision for autism diagnosis.

16. Reasonable adjustments and accessible environments

Reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities can vary depending on the individual's needs. Some common adjustments include:

- Structured and predictable routines
- Clear and concise communication

- Use of visual aids, such as diagrams or pictures
- Allowing for extra time to process information
- Providing a quiet and low-stimulation environment
- Breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- Using technology, such as assistive software, to support learning

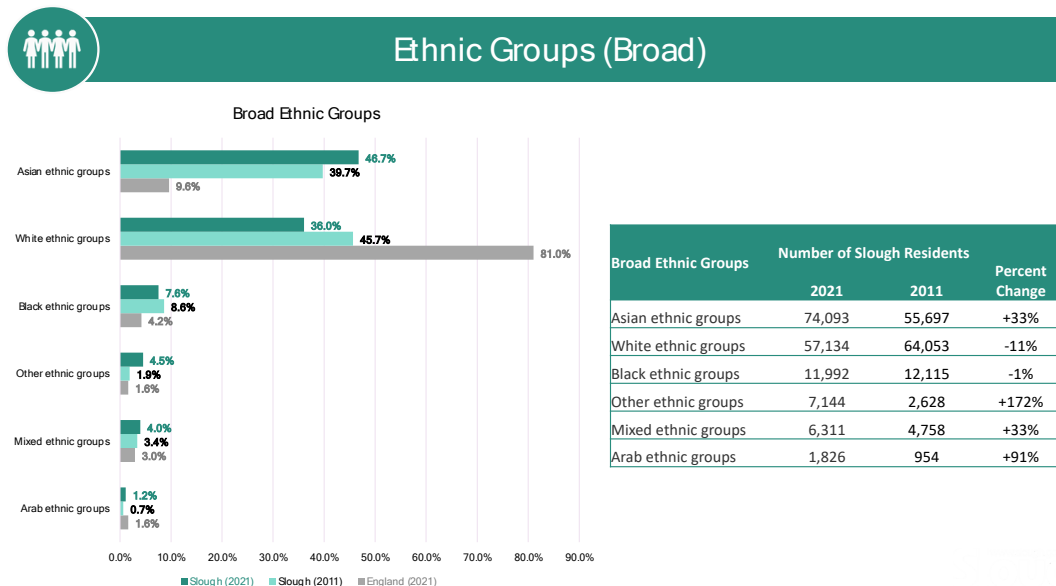
We are working to ensure these reasonable adjustments are happening in Slough and improve in areas identified where this is not evident.

People with learning disabilities are not currently able to come into the Slough Council’s Observatory House building causing a barrier between health and social care. The Council wishes to make its buildings more accessible and we will work with the relevant service areas to ensure that the needs and accessibility requirements of people with learning disabilities are understood.

17. Support for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups

Support for individuals with a learning disability from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and other ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds may face additional challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of cultural competence among support staff.

Figure 6: Ethnic Groups in Slough



Source: 2021 Census

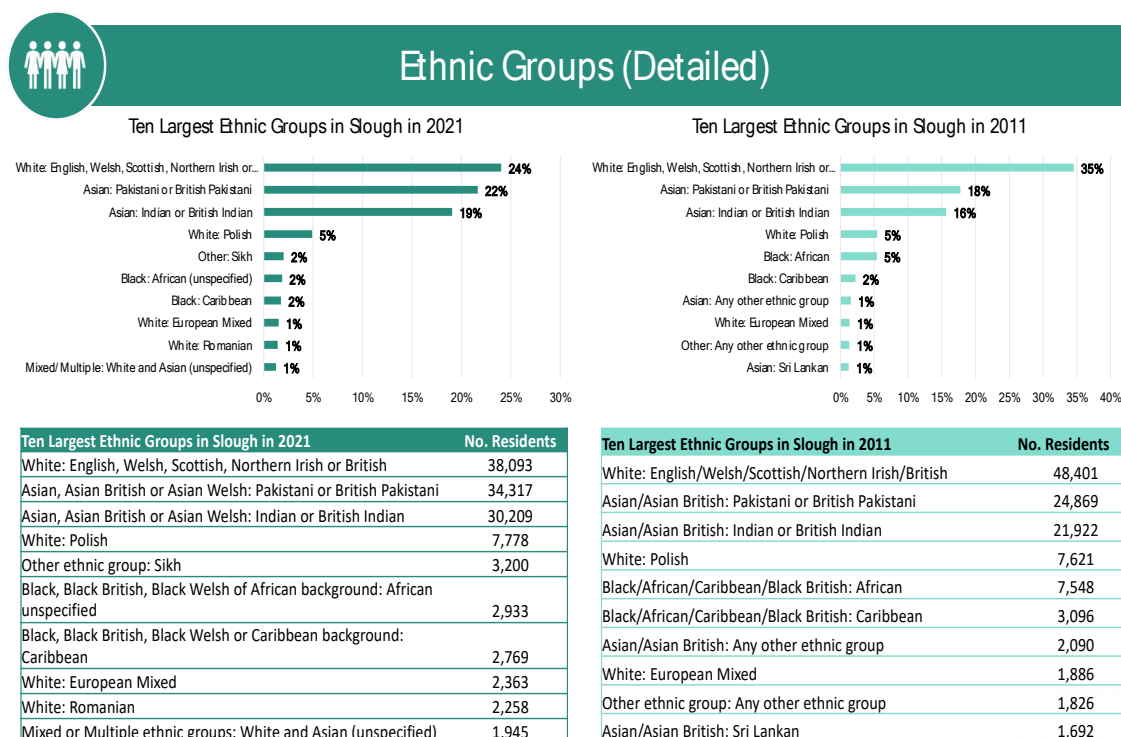
The Fenton Report, PHE Beyond the Data: “It is clear that COVID-19 did not create health inequalities, but rather exposed and exacerbated longstanding inequalities affecting BAME groups”³³

³³ [Fenton K, Pawson E, de Souza-Thomas L. \(2020\) Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups. Public Health England.](#)

To address these challenges, we will ensure the provision of culturally and linguistically responsive services and support wherever possible to adults with learning disabilities.

1. Cultural Brokering: we will work with individuals and their families to navigate cultural differences and overcome barriers to accessing support services.
2. Bilingual Support Staff: where possible, we will provide support staff who are fluent in the individual's native language to improve communication and understanding. Translation services are also available.
3. Cultural Sensitivity Training: we will provide training for support staff on cultural competence, diversity, and inclusion can help ensure culturally responsive support.
4. Community Outreach and Engagement: where there gaps, we will build partnerships with community organisations and leaders who can help to build trust and improve access to services for individuals from diverse backgrounds.
5. Direct payments can also be used to recruit personal assistants from their community who understand their cultural and spiritual needs.

Figure 7: Ethnic Groups in Slough (2011 and 2021 Census)



Source: 2021 Census

We recognise and will address the unique needs of individuals with a learning disability from BAME backgrounds and other ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds to ensure that they receive the right support and services they need to thrive.

18. Integrated Care

We are strengthening our specialist integrated multi-disciplinary health and social care support in the community for people with a learning disability and autism, and we will continue to ensure inter-agency collaborative working, including between specialist and mainstream services.

19. Employment

The Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) requires Local Authorities to report on the proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment. One of the priorities in our strategy for adults with learning disabilities in Slough is raising the aspirations in terms of what can and should be achieved in relation to employment, skills and training opportunities. We will work with local service providers and businesses to increase the range and nature of skills and training opportunities available across pathways, sector and qualifications, ensuring the support to individuals, their families and carers meets need and secures appropriate outcomes to access employment. This is considered as part of the action plan.

20. Transport

Good transport links are crucial for maintaining independence, enabling people to seek and sustain employment, access health services and socialise. Many adults with a learning disability cannot drive and therefore depend on public transport, or on family members, friends or carers. Slough Borough Council will ensure there is an increase in the number of adults with learning disabilities who have access to concessionary travelcards via promotion through the Learning Disabilities Team.

21. Accommodation and Placements

A key area of focus for the learning disability and autism NHS Long Term Plan is reducing the number of inappropriate out-of-area placements. Placing people with a learning disability in a local authority area away from their usual local authority of residence can be stressful for both the individual and their families, as well as incurring significant costs for the local authority of residence.

Data from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) shows the number of adults with a learning disability who receive support from social services in Slough reported as living in settled accommodation in 2022/23.

The table below shows the Learning Disability Supported Living Home Placements in Slough and out of borough placements. This shows that there is insufficient capacity in Slough to meet local authority demand. There are currently 12 providers supporting LD clients in Supported Living services within the Borough, and 5 out of borough.

Table 4: LD Supported Living Placement Provider

Slough LD Supported Living Placement Provider	Placements
ABILITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION	45
Achieve Together- CMG & The Regard Partnership Ltd	8
CHOICE Excel Support Services	13
Collaborative Care Solutions	3
COMFORT CARE SERVICES	19
Creative Support Ltd	9
DIMENSIONS (ADP)	8
INDEPENDENT SUPPORTED LIVING AND DISABILITIES (ISLAD)	8
Macadamia Support Limited	5
SEYMOUR HOUSE	1
Uniq Health Care LTD	2
VOYAGE 1 LIMITED	18
Total Slough Placements	139
Out of borough placements	8

Source: Slough Case Management System, June 2022

The table below shows the Learning Disability Residential Home Placements in Slough and the number of out of borough placements. This shows that there is insufficient capacity in Slough to meet local authority demand. There are currently 3 providers supporting LD clients in Residential service within the Borough, and 38 out of borough.

Table 5: LD Residential Placement Provider

Slough LD Residential Placement Provider	Placements
Optimum Specialised Homes Limited	3
REACH LIMITED	1
SEYMOUR HOUSE	4
Total Slough placements	8
Out of borough placements	38

Source: Slough Case Management System, June 2022

The Council has developed an **Adult Social Care Market Position Statement**. This sets out the range current provision and how the Council wishes to develop the market going forward. This is currently in draft and will be presented to Cabinet in Autumn / Winter 2023/24. The need to further develop the market for accommodation and support for people with a learning disability is contained within the action plan.

22. Preparing for Adulthood/Transition

We want to support our young people and their families to be aspirational for their futures. We believe that all young people with a learning disability, including those with complex needs should have the opportunity to live as independently as possible, have access to good health and social care services, with employment and educational opportunities as appropriate and to be included in their local communities.

We recognise that transition from childhood to adulthood can be a worrying time for young people and their families. It is a time of significant change. Educational provision, support services and the way that decisions are made, will all change as a young person becomes an adult. Slough Borough Council will work with its partners to ensure that young people and their families are supported to actively prepare for their future as adults.

Over the next five years we will take the following actions:

- Improve the information available to young people and their families about the transition process and how Slough Borough Council and its partners will support young people to prepare for adulthood.
- Engage with young people and their families, ensuring their views are listened to and acted on.
- To ensure that young people are at the heart of the preparation for adulthood journey, supported to make choices and to be more in control of their future.
- We will start the transition process at an earlier stage, so that young people and their families are clear about what will happen when the young person reaches adulthood.
- We will work with our colleagues in education, children's social care services, health, housing and local service providers to create a seamless pathway for young people, so that the young person's needs can be met locally, reducing the need to move out of the borough.

Feedback from Engagement

Participants within the engagement event at Observatory House in September were keen to stress the importance of Networking and engagement between Children's Services, Adults Services, Housing and Parents / Carers of young people with learning disabilities. We acknowledge the importance of access to relevant information and the value which liaising directly with other parents and key professionals can bring. We have factored this into the action plan found within the strategy at section 25.

23. Safeguarding

All our commissioning activities will be informed by a rigorous approach to safeguarding including implementation of the learning from the Learning Disability Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme. This will help people with a learning disability enjoy a range of life opportunities without constraint, to allow adults with learning disabilities in Slough lead safe and fulfilling lives.

We will continue to monitor safeguarding referrals for adults with a learning disability and use data from these referrals to inform, guide and shape service changes and future development. This plan sets out what we want to change, how we are going to do it and what will be different as a result.

Feedback from Engagement

The need for training and awareness of risk and signs of abuse were considered important for the social care workforce and the general public. All Council staff are required to undertake mandatory on-line training concerning safeguarding. Greater promotion of training available to general public has been factored into the action plan.

24. Accessible information and Easy Read

Accessible Information

From 1 August 2016 onwards, all organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care have been legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.³⁴ The Standard is ambitious and it is recognised that it may take organisations some time reach the requirements in terms of accessible information.

The Accessible Information Standard builds on the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which is explicit about the provision of information in an accessible format. In addition, the Care Act 2014 details specific duties for local authorities with regards to the provision of advice and information, setting out that, “Information and advice provided under this section must be accessible to, and proportionate to the needs of, those for whom it is being provided.”

Information can be made accessible in a variety of formats including:

- For people with visual impairments – audio, audio description, Braille, Moon, telephone

³⁴ [NHS England Report Template 1 - long length title](#)

- For people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment – British Sign Language, subtitling, textphone, SMS
- For people with learning disabilities—easy read and Makaton

Easy Read

The Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities produces some information in Easy Read format for people who use adults social care services. Easy read information is also available nationally from organisations such as Easy Health³⁵ and the UK Government who provide easy read versions of national policies and information on government service such as Universal Credit, Access to Work, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) etc.

Feedback from Engagement

Up to date information which was available in an easy read format was identified as being important to people with learning disabilities. The Action Plan seeks to ensure the widespread adoption of easy read across the Learning Disabilities service and that relevant web pages on the Council website are also available in an easy read format.

Slough Adult Social Care recognises that we still have work to do to improve the accessibility of information for people with learning disabilities and have included this activity within the action plan.

25. Action Plan

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
Priority 1 Promote Independence	Ensure that advocacy service works effectively with people with learning disabilities	Work with the provider to ensure they can access adequate data and provide an appropriate level of service.	December 2023 ASC Commissioner Contracts Manager
	Support people with learning disabilities to self-advocate.	Arrange through partnership board – see below.	
	Develop life skills training for people with learning disabilities.	Build this requirement into all new service specifications and contract variation of existing	March 2024 onwards.

³⁵ [Easy Health | Home](#)

³⁶ Timeframes subject to review once Steering Group has been established along with how sub-groups might be established and progressed.

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		<p>specifications for supported living providers.</p> <p>Review this requirement as part of the Quality Assurance programme.</p> <p>Developmental approach within the CTPLD team towards working with service users eg travel training.</p>	<p>Head Market Management</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities Service.</p> <p>Measures: ASCOF and No of Direct Payments.</p>
<p>Priority 2</p> <p>Ensure access to good quality care and support</p>	<p>Maintain and increase contract management and quality assurance of care and support services.</p> <p>Effective engagement with providers to share information and promote good practice, including key staff competencies and training requirements.</p> <p>Understand and value the role of Carers.</p>	<p>Planned and responsive quality assurance visits with reporting as necessary into Care Governance Board.</p> <p>Re-establishment of a programme of Provider Forums</p> <p>An Adult Carers Strategy 2023 – 26 and Action Plan was agreed by Cabinet in September 2023. Delivery of action plan is being</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2024 and ongoing.</p> <p>Head of Market Management</p> <p>Measures: CQC – State of Market Reports. Provider ratings across the Borough.</p> <p>Attendance at Provider Forums.</p> <p>September 2023 and ongoing</p> <p>Commissioner for Older People and Carers.</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		<p>overseen by a Steering Group.</p>	
	<p>Improve contact with the Learning Disabilities Team</p>	<p>Publicise clear contact details and access information.</p> <p>Widespread adoption of easy read across the Learning Disabilities Team and on the Council website.</p> <p>Review information on the website and make web pages easy read.</p> <p>Produce easy read leaflets about the service available.</p> <p>Provide links to easy read information</p> <p>Ensure all assessments and support plans are in the right format for the individual.</p> <p>Explore and adopt use of different media such as videos.</p>	<p>April 2024</p> <p>Director ASC Operations</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities</p> <p>Measures: Satisfaction Surveys. .</p>
	<p>Promote person centred approaches</p>	<p>Team managers to ensure that person-centred approaches continue to be embedded in practice.</p> <p>Provide training and development for staff to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality, person-centred services</p>	<p>March 2024 and periodic review.</p> <p>Director ASC Operations</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities</p>
	<p>Transforming Care: Work with individuals and families in Slough to prevent crisis and to work</p>	<p>Develop positive behaviour support plans (PBS) with a person-centred approach that aim to understand and address the underlying</p>	<p>To start: December 23.</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
	with providers to enhance the quality of support for people whose behaviour challenges.	<p>causes of behaviour that challenges.</p> <p>Offer training and development for staff on positive behaviour support, communication strategies, and de-escalation techniques.</p> <p>Consider invest to save opportunities.</p> <p>Proactive engagement in Community Treatment Reviews (CTRs) and widespread understanding of Dynamic Support Registers.</p>	<p>Commissioner for LD</p> <p>Measures: No / % of Hospital Admissions.</p>
	Seek to establish crash pad facilities to accommodate individuals in crisis and prevent hospital admissions.	We will work with partners and other Local Authorities through the Health and Social Care partnership board and other forums (eg E Berks Directors Group) board to assess need and if appropriate to seek to establish crash pad facilities / integrate into existing resource.	<p>Start conversations immediately –</p> <p>March 2025</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities</p> <p>Commissioner for Learning Disabilities.</p>
	Support independence through the use of technology.	Progress opportunities for a funded pilot for assistive technology for people with learning disabilities in Slough as part of the ASC Transformation Programme.	<p>Commence early 2024</p> <p>Head of Commissioning</p> <p>Measures: Established through pilot.</p>
<p>Priority 3</p> <p>Progress the Integration of Health and Social Care (and improve</p>	Facilitate better partnership working	Establish a partnerships board or forum to work together with the wider stakeholder community – involving family members as well as the person.	January 2024

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
partnership working)	Scope opportunities with partners and with people with learning disabilities and the family members for integration of health and social care.	<p>Establish a Steering Group (linked to the partnerships board or forum) to have oversight of the delivery of this Strategy.</p> <p>Develop a shared vision for the integration of health and social care and work together to meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities. This will include senior level conversations between the Slough Executive Director for Adult Social Care, the Frimley ICB Place Convenor for Slough and the Locality Director of Community Adult Health.</p> <p>Areas for consideration include:</p> <p>Opportunities for joint management and co-location of health and social care teams.</p> <p>Single Point of Access.</p> <p>Common eligibility and assessment criteria.</p> <p>Development of joint pathways.</p> <p>Agreement of Core Tasks for Key Professionals.</p> <p>Enhanced contact between GPs and Adult Social Care Teams to improve waiting lists to GPs.</p> <p>Improve awareness and usage of health passports.</p>	<p>January 2024</p> <p>Commence January 2024–December 2025</p> <p>Director of ASC Operations</p> <p>Director of Commissioning</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		<p>Improve access to health related training (diabetes, dementia) for social care staff.</p> <p>Increased take up of annual health check, health screening and other health checks to reflect NHS targets.</p>	
	<p>Ensure adequate support for adults with learning disabilities within Wexham Hospital</p>	<p>Work with Frimley Healthcare colleagues to support and progress recruitment to LD liaison nurse post at Wexham Park Hospital for Slough.</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities.</p> <p>Measure: Recruitment undertaken and liaison nurse in post.</p>
	<p>Reduction in adults with learning disabilities presenting in A&E and crisis response teams</p>	<p>Undertake feasibility study for jointly commissioning a positive behaviour support resource.</p>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>Commissioner for Learning Disabilities</p> <p>Measures: Established through the commissioning project.</p>
	<p>Access to Council buildings</p>	<p>Work with other service areas to support better access to Council buildings such as Observatory House. Changes are dependent upon the Council's intended use and occupation of buildings currently in use.</p>	<p>Ongoing discussion at Executive Director level.</p>
<p>Priority 4</p>	<p>Work collaboratively with Slough Children First to understand the needs of children</p>	<p>Continuing participation within the:</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Director of ASC Operations</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
Ensure effective transitions	with learning disabilities and plan for their transition.	<p>SBC SEND Board chaired by the Director of Children’s Services.</p> <p>SBC / SCF Strategic Transitions Group – Jointly Chaired by AD ASC Operations and the Director of Operations (SCF) .</p> <p>Tracking of young people from 14+</p> <p>ASC involvement in Year 9 and subsequent reviews as appropriate</p> <p>Early allocation to ASC staff 17+</p> <p>Draft CA care & support plan by age 17 1/2</p> <p>Improved planning around PfA outcomes</p>	Measures: contained within work programmes for SEND Board and SBC/SCF Strategic Transitions Group.
	Establish networking opportunities for parents / carers.	<p>Operate forums/ events for parents of young people with learning disabilities transitioning to adult social care.</p> <p>Developing better partnerships with schools and colleges (ongoing)</p> <p>Ensure clear links with the SEND Plan and listening to the voice of the Young Person.</p> <p>Scope out opportunities for voluntary and community sector to develop further as</p>	<p>April 2024 and ongoing</p> <p>Partnerships Manager</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>Commissioner for Adult Social Care</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		part of annual grants programme.	
<p>Priority 5</p> <p>Facilitate access to employment training and skills.</p>	<p>Enhance the employment, training and skills offer.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Develop partnerships with employers, training providers, and community organisations.</p> <p>Engage with employers to promote the benefits of employing adults with learning disabilities and dispel misconceptions or stereotypes.</p> <p>Provide training to employers to support inclusive practices.</p> <p>Offer specialised training and support to adults with learning disabilities to enhance their employability and retention in roles.</p> <p>Join with SCF on existing initiatives such support internships and work with NDTi.</p>	<p>November 2024 for scoping project.</p> <p>May 2025 for implementation</p> <p>This will be led by the LD Commissioner and the Head of Learning Disabilities but success will be dependent upon drawing upon resources within the Council and the local community.</p>
<p>Priority 6</p> <p>Embed an evidence based and data driven approach to commissioning</p>	<p>Esure sufficient provision locally to enable individuals to live as independently as possible within the local community.</p>	<p>The Council’s Market Position Statement and Commissioning Intentions are currently in development and will provide information on how the Council wishes to develop the local market.</p> <p>This will include provision for young people coming through transitions, including services for young women only.</p> <p>Progress workstream to review accommodation and</p>	<p>Market Position Statement will be presented to Cabinet in Autumn / Winter 2023/24.</p> <p>Director of Commissioning</p> <p>March 2024 and ongoing (ASC</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		support in the borough and create opportunities based upon the needs of the individual with a drive aswell towards increasing efficiency.	Transformation Programme) ASC Transformation Programme Measures
<p>Priority 7</p> <p>Keep people safe.</p>	<p>Strengthening LeDeR reviews and reporting arrangements</p>	<p>Draw upon learning from LeDeR reviews. Look at positive experiences, End of Life etc.</p> <p>Ensure that data on the mortality is collected accurately and consistently.</p> <p>Increase awareness and engagement with the LeDeR programme among health and social care providers in Slough. Raise awareness among families.</p> <p>Ensure that LeDeR reviews are conducted in a timely manner and that the findings are acted upon.</p> <p>Ensure that systemic issues that contribute to the mortality of adults with learning disabilities are identified and addressed. This will involve working with broader issues such as health inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion.</p>	<p>April 2024 and ongoing</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities.</p> <p>Commissioner for Learning disabilities.</p> <p>Safeguarding Partnerships Manager</p> <p>Measures: TBC</p>
		<p>Work with Safeguarding Partnership Board to raise the profile of safeguarding issues affecting people with learning disabilities and how these can be addressed through partnerships arrangements.</p>	<p>September 2024.</p> <p>Head of Learning Disabilities.</p>

Priority	Action	What we will work on to achieve these actions	Timeframes ³⁶ / Lead Officer
		<p>Promote training which is available to parents, carers and members of the general public</p> <p>Promoting safe spaces – locally.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Partnerships Managers</p> <p>Measures: Conversion rates for safeguarding concerns.</p>

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APPENDIX TO LEARNING DISABILITY STRATEGY

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Feedback from Engagement Event with people with learning disabilities, their support workers, members of the co-production network, officers from the People (Adults) Directorate and professional stakeholders on 18th September 2023

An engagement event took place at Observatory House in September 2023. The event was attended by people with learning disabilities, their support workers, members of the co-production network, officers from the People (Adults) Directorate and professional stakeholders. The engagement event was positive, and attendees broadly agreed with the seven priorities. The following suggestions on actions which should be taken under each of the priority areas that have been used to inform this Strategy are summarised below:

Priorities	Feedback	Minimum Inclusion in Strategy (Page Number)
Promote Independence	Continuous engagement with the stakeholder community to plan initiatives	3
	Improved accessibility features in the community	3
	Improved access to advocacy services and information on how to access advocacy services.	9
	Opportunities to develop skills toward increased levels of independence (functional, social, professional, etc)	9
	More opportunities for people to get together in the community	9
	Peer support and Expert by Experience initiatives	Action Plan
	Improved access to technology and reasonable adaptations	Action Plan
Ensure access to Good Quality Care and Support	Improved consideration for accessibility requirements in the community	3
	Build relationship with the stakeholder community. There is the need to have a dialogue with service users	3
	Improved communication among services, professionals, and the community in accessible format	3
	Person-Centred Approach and Person-Centred Planning.	3
	Valuing Carers involvement (Learning Disability Carers are lifelong Carers)	3
	Creating value through effective staffing and recruitment and by working smarter	23

	Improved capacity and assessment pathways for supported living placements.	28
	Improved Social Work Team Response timing and more clarity on how to contact the team	Action Plan
	Facilitate access to service with a single professional coordinator	Action Plan
	Dedicated person to access for information and help	Action Plan
Progress the Integration of Health and Social Care	Shared responsibilities between Health and Social Care – working together	3
	Improved collaboration to reduce waiting lists	3
	Improved access to learning opportunities for Adult Social Care staff	23
	Increased awareness of Health Passport document in the community	24
	Improved communication between GP surgeries and Adult Social Care teams.	Action Plan
	Improved access for referrals to LD liaison nurse.	Action Plan
Ensure effective Transitions	Implement discussion forums to work together	3
	Involving carers in the decision-making process together with the person	10
	Timely referral	10
	Network engagement among Special Education Needs, children, and adult services	10
	Creation of skill building and employment opportunities	10
	Pathways in support of work opportunities for organisations that support placements (training, resources)	10
	Improved involvement of housing department in discussion forums	10
	Pathway for early preparation to support the passage from childhood to adulthood	29
	Financial planning between children and adult services to forecast needs	Action Plan
Facilitate Access to Employment,	Promote people’s independence and autonomy	3

Training, and Skills	Creation of a network to develop tailored opportunities	28
	Resources and learning support for organisations providing work placements	28
	Skill development programmes within the community (functional skills)	Action Plan
	Creation of a local agency to support access to work and internship programmes for people with a learning disability	Action Plan
	Pathways for peer support / expert by experience trainings	Action Plan
Keep people safe	Balancing the need for independence and the need for protection	3
	Awareness pathways to promote self-protection to start early in life (childhood)	3
	Make Slough a Learning Disability friendly town by improving awareness of learning disability and autism among the population	7
	Improved access and awareness of technology that can support safety, including awareness of technology risks	25
	Increased awareness of risk factors among the adult social care workforce and the wider community	Action Plan

Feedback from Engagement Event online with service users, their support workers, and care providers operating in the Slough area on 2nd October 2023

An engagement event took place via Microsoft Teams in October 2023. The event was attended by CTPLD Service Users, their support workers, Care Providers operating in the Slough area, and officers from the People (Adults) Directorate and CTPLD. The engagement event was positive, and attendees broadly agreed with the seven priorities. The following suggestions on actions which should be taken under each of the priority areas that have been used to inform this Strategy are summarised below:

Priorities	Feedback	Minimum Inclusion in Strategy (Page Number)
Promote Independence	Improved access to information on available services and local resources.	3
	More opportunities for people to get together in the community without selection criteria for access	3
	To develop a community of practice for Learning	3
	Opportunities to develop skills toward increased levels of independence (functional, social, professional, etc)	9
	Disability Improved access to paid work opportunities rather than volunteering	10
	Frequent and accessible transport network to travel independently	28
	Increase face to face initiatives rather than online events	Action Plan
Ensure access to Good Quality Care and Support	Improved training offer for adult social care workforce	23
	Improving access to face-to-face appointments with GPs and other primary care professionals	23
	Improved access to specialist medical services (dentist)	23
	Adequate funding to deliver outstanding care and support	29
	Improved access to assisted and augmented communication facilities and awareness of communication needs	31
	Improved access to support hours to attend leisure activities	Action Plan

Progress the Integration of Health and Social Care	Improved access to allied health professionals' involvement (i.e., psychologists)	3
	Multidisciplinary approach (MDT works well)	3
	Improved access to information on relevant professionals (name, job title, contact details)	3
Ensure effective Transitions	Working with families to understand the change in their role – the adult person has the final say	3
	Effective handover of information about the person among children and adult professionals	10
	Improved access to education and skill development opportunities	29
	Improved support with financial matters and management of tenancies	Action Plan
Facilitate Access to Employment, Training, and Skills	Review eligibility criteria to access work placement opportunities	10
	Improve awareness of accessibility needs and reasonable adaptations	25
	Improve awareness of augmented and assisted communication tools	31
	Dedicated platform to advertise work opportunities in accessible format	Action Plan
Keep people safe	Positive Risk Taking	3
	Actively working with the Police to raise awareness of learning disability and risks	3
	Improved capacity assessment pathways	7
	Raise awareness of Learning Disability within the community	7
	Embed risk assessments in the community to promote independence	18
	Due diligence concerning the recruitment of adult social care staff	19
	Embed assisted and augmented communication to facilitate access to community	31
	Improve access to whistleblowing information and whistleblowing pathways	Action Plan

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2023
Subject:	Services to support those experiencing domestic abuse
Lead Member:	Cllr I Ahmed - Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor – Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Garry Tallett - Community Safety Service • Regulatory Services Team
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	No
Exempt:	No
Decision Subject To Call In:	Yes
Appendices:	None

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report provides a strategic update on the services that the council commissions for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and the wider partnership support for victims/survivors of domestic abuse in Slough. This includes the vital role of independent domestic violence advocacy services and a recommendation to agree a short-term extension with the current provider, pending a more detailed review of provision.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a. Note the work taking place in respect of domestic abuse, the council's statutory responsibilities and a summary of an overarching needs assessment completed earlier this year.
- b. Agree to extend the period of the existing contract for domestic abuse service by Hestia for one year until 31st December 2024, as part of a wider strategic approach to domestic abuse at the same value as the current agreed contractual rate.
- c. Agree that officers shall bring a further report to Cabinet in March 2024 to provide an update on progress, together with a completed Safer Accommodation Strategy and other linked strategies to enable a decision on further recommissioning of the

independent domestic violence advocacy (IDVA) service to commence on 1st January 2025.

Reason:

- 1.2 The Domestic Abuse Act places statutory obligations on Tier 1 local authorities including completing a Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment and associated strategy. This work is due for completion in December 2023.
- 1.3 The council currently commissions independent domestic violence advocacy (**IDVA**) services to survivors of domestic abuse who are at heightened risk of serious harm or homicide. These services are part of a wider eco-system that tackles domestic abuse. The current contract ends on 31st December 2023. IDVA services provide an essential service to those at risk of serious harm/homicide and is an essential part of the council's strategy to tackle domestic abuse.
- 1.4 An overarching domestic abuse needs assessment was completed earlier this year that has informed a partnership domestic abuse strategy due to be presented at Safer Slough Partnership (**SSP**) in January 2024 for onward approval by Cabinet. It is important that to align all areas of DA work to enable alignment of resources and commissioning of future services. Pending this more detailed review, it is recommended that a 12-month extension is granted to the current IDVA providers.

Commissioner Review

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners who have no specific comments to make.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 The council plays a lead role in the overall SSP partnership response to domestic abuse, providing the leadership and co-ordination in accordance with its statutory responsibilities. The Council needs to complete further work to ensure compliance with its statutory duties and this work is scheduled for completion in December 2023. A further overall assessment will be completed to inform a future strategy with a view to seeking Cabinet approval for this in the Spring 2024.
- 2.2 The **Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027** includes two priorities that link with Domestic Abuse:
 - A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives.
 - A borough for children and young people to thrive. The Domestic Abuse Act specifically notes that children who witness domestic abuse are treated as victims.

Options considered

Option	Description
A	Slough Borough Council does not extend the existing contract and end provision of local support to those at high risk of serious harm or homicide with effect from 1 st January 2024.

	<p>The council's budget for domestic abuse services is £253,700 per annum, that may in effect be saved if local support is not funded.</p> <p>Failure to provide appropriate support risks the lives of victims/children and further cost to the council and wider public purse.</p> <p>This option A is not recommended.</p>
B	<p>Slough Borough Council extends its existing contract until 31st June 2024 to enable the decommissioning and end of existing service provision.</p> <p>This option ensures continuity of service to victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>There is significant demand on advocacy services that are delivered locally to survivors.</p> <p>This option B is not recommended.</p>
C	<p>Slough Borough Council extends its existing contract until 31st December 2024. (This will enable a later and separate decision to be made on whether to pursue a recommissioning and market testing of advocacy services for 2025 onwards.)</p> <p>This option ensures continuity of service to victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>It ensures that appropriate, professional, and local advocacy is in place to meet the needs of those at high risk of serious harm.</p> <p>It enables the alignment of a 'to be completed' Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment and Strategy (Statutory requirement) with an existing needs assessment and mapping of services to design and commission a new service.</p> <p>It ensures local service provision to those at high risk of serious harm/homicide.</p> <p>This option C is recommended.</p>

Plan

2.3 The full plan is shown at Appendix C but is summarised against key milestones below.

Completion of Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment, Equalities Needs Impact Assessment and Strategy to align with overarching DA strategy.	December 2023
Options for commissioning domestic abuse services (including advocacy)	January 2023
Safer Accommodation Strategy (the Statutory obligation) and associated strategies to Cabinet	March 2023
Procurement approach finalised	April 2023
New domestic abuse services commence	January 2025

Background

- 2.4 The Domestic Abuse Act imposes several statutory obligations on Tier 1 local authorities in England and Wales, including:
- Assess the need for accommodation-based support in its area, known as a ‘Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment’;
 - Prepare and publish a ‘Safer Accommodation Strategy’ for the provision of such support in its area;
 - Appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board to oversee the delivery of the strategy;
 - Co-operate with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, an independent public official who monitors the response to domestic abuse across sectors;
 - Recognising domestic abuse as a ground for priority need for homelessness assistance.

Strategic Oversight

- 2.5 Such is the cross-cutting nature of Domestic Abuse, it features as a priority area within the SSP and Safeguarding Partnerships. Adopted as a priority of the SSP, a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was formed in 2022, initially chaired by the Director of Children’s Services.
- 2.6 Whilst the SSP is a stand-alone statutory partnership, there are direct lines to other partnership boards including local Safeguarding arrangements and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.7 Now chaired by a local senior police officer, the board has overseen the production of a local domestic abuse needs assessment, and an overall domestic abuse strategy that will be presented to the Safer Slough Partnership in January 2024.
- 2.8 The council has a statutory obligation under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to report progress of the domestic abuse board to both central government and the Domestic Abuse Commissioners office.

(a) Current Situation – Service Provision

- 2.9 The council commissions core advocacy (**IDVA**) services from Hestia, in the same way that other councils fund such services across England and Wales. Even though there is no statutory obligation under the Domestic Abuse Act to provide IDVA services, the role of the IDVA is recognised as best practice, and their importance and status are recognised by professionals from all disciplines and referred to in the current statutory guidance (July 2022).
- 2.10 The council currently commissions Hestia to provide advocacy (IDVA) services to high-risk victims of domestic abuse. These services have been provided by the council since 2018 and the contract ends on 31st December 2023. This is funded entirely from council general fund budgets. . . Hestia Housing and Support (Charity no 294555 and Company number 020020165) is a well establish company with a reported £42m turnover in 2021/22 and provides services for many other local authorities and central government, including services supporting victims of Domestic Abuse.

- 2.11 An IDVA is a specialist professional who provides high-risk victims of domestic abuse with a tailored and person-centred safety and support plan so that victims and their families are protected from abusive behaviour. This includes, but is not limited to, immediate risk assessment, safety planning, advocacy, emotional support, and empowerment. They can help a victim to become safe and rebuild their life and represent their voice at a Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (**MARAC**), as well as helping them to navigate the criminal justice process and working with the different statutory agencies to provide wraparound support.
- 2.12 The council also ensures emergency refuge accommodation is available to survivors of domestic abuse, through the provision of three premises at a significantly reduced rent (peppercorn rent) to DASH, a local charity, funded via government grant. These arrangements had not been subject to contractual or service level agreements until recently and are now continued on an annual basis only. The lease situation regarding the premises is currently being reviewed and will inform future commissioning options as described at 3.8.
- 2.13 There are, outside Slough Borough Council provision, other domestic abuse services that are available/accessible to victims/survivors nationally, regionally (Thames Valley), and locally in Slough. These are bespoke services, and do not provide the immediate local contact for medium and high-risk cases. The provision is mainly short term and dependent on grant funding.

(b) Needs Assessment and Strategy Development

- 2.14 The local domestic needs assessment (**NA**) that has informed the development of an overarching domestic strategy results from work drawn from across a range of partnership disciplines, including Council services, Slough Children First, primary and secondary healthcare, the voluntary sector, and commissioned providers.
- 2.15 The NA was structured across the following elements.
- **Data:** Information from sources such JSNA, crime and health data. It was also informed by information from children’s and adults social care and commissioned / non-commissioned services.
 - **Opinion:** The views of survivors, professionals and communities were sought via workshops and a public consultation.
 - **Service Provision:** An assessment of what is available in Slough and more widely.
 - **Best Practice:** The NA drew together information from a variety of sources, such as the Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance, Domestic Abuse Commissioners office, and other academic sources of evolving practice.
- 2.16 In Slough, the volume of domestic incidents has remained relatively static, and domestic abuse crimes has risen steadily as shown below.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Incidents	4668	5010	4699	4807
Crimes	2614	2791	2894	3017

2.17 The commissioned provider, Hestia, advocate for the majority of survivors and their children. There are annually, over 200 cases heard at the MARAC panel as shown in the table below.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Adult survivors	239	264	213

2.18 The needs assessment also showed that children were listed as present in a high proportion (c50%) of domestic abuse occurrences (Incidents and crimes), and that high numbers of children were associated with Marac cases.

2.19 The needs assessment found a strong correlation between locations and indices of deprivation indicating opportunities to consider how to ensure localised service provision.

Service Provision

2.20 Service provision may be broken down into three parts: (a) crisis support; (b) emotional, therapeutic support and other specialist support; and (c) universal prevention initiatives.

2.21 Crisis support falls into two main categories, that of independent advocacy for those at medium and high risk of serious harm, and also emergency accommodation for survivors and children fleeing high risk domestic abuse.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA)

2.22 The current service provides three IDVAs, an outreach practitioner who deals with lower risk clients and management support.

2.23 Annually the current provider (Hestia) has supported over 600 survivors each year, as shown below.

Year	2020-21	2021-2022	2022-23
Survivors supported by IDVA	482	539	598
Survivors Supported in Total	62	690	765

2.24 The Hestia work with clients for anywhere between 1 and 3 months. Performance across a range of KPIs is subject to quarterly contract meetings, that ensures adherence to minimum standards and delivery of outcomes such as risk reduction. It should be noted that the original contract value has reduced over time as planned and also that no uplift has occurred over that time and therefore a 5.7% inflation uplift was awarded for 2023/24 and the provider is managing the pressures. The extension of the contract will provide time for the strategic basis for services to be completed and which will inform the later configuration and tender of the service given pressures and the evaluation of needs going forward.

Emergency Accommodation provision

2.25 Fourteen (14) units across three premises (6,5,3 beds respectively) are available across Slough. Slough receives a wide range of clients typically from London and home counties due to the transport and travel links and being out of London. This accommodation is not typically used by Slough residents owing to the heightened risk

that survivors face from perpetrators. Slough residents are typically accommodated off borough in other counties or London. Demand for refuge space is high, though with an estimated national shortfall of 30. The number of units the council provides is proportionate to population levels.

2.26 DASH have supported 97 survivors over the 3 years of 2020-2022 inclusive. This is in accordance with general standards of a survivor staying in accommodation for 6 months, receiving support until such time they can move on to permanent accommodation.

Other Service Provision

2.27 There are a variety of other support services available locally, nationally and Thames Valley wide. It is recognised the pivotal role that these agencies play in supporting survivors of domestic abuse, though they do not provide the essential local support for those at medium or high risk of domestic abuse. The range of these services includes dedicated outreach that includes services for Black, Asian, Ethnic Diverse communities, counselling, legal, sexual violence services, interventions for perpetrators and services for children who have witnessed domestic abuse. It is a legal duty for the Council to provide services for children and acknowledge them as victims in their own right.

2.28 The funding provision for all these projects is complex, with the council, DULUC, OPCC and other funding streams paying for the variety of services. (See Appendix A)

2.29 One example is the 'BRAVE project' funded by the OPCC. This is a Berkshire wide service which provides mental health support for men and women who have been victims of domestic abuse. This project is led by psychologists, is trauma informed and provides a 12-week intervention with wider opportunities to become ambassadors for domestic abuse and work within the community to help achieve long term change.

Survivor Opinion

2.30 A number of means of consultation were made available to seek the opinion of communities, professionals, and survivors. Below provides a summary of two aspects of feedback.

2.31 Within the consultation, several questions were tabled, one of which related to what the biggest barriers are preventing people reporting their experiences. In order, these were:

- fear of agencies such as police and social care
- fear of not being believed
- fear of breaking up the family
- fear of bringing shame on the family.

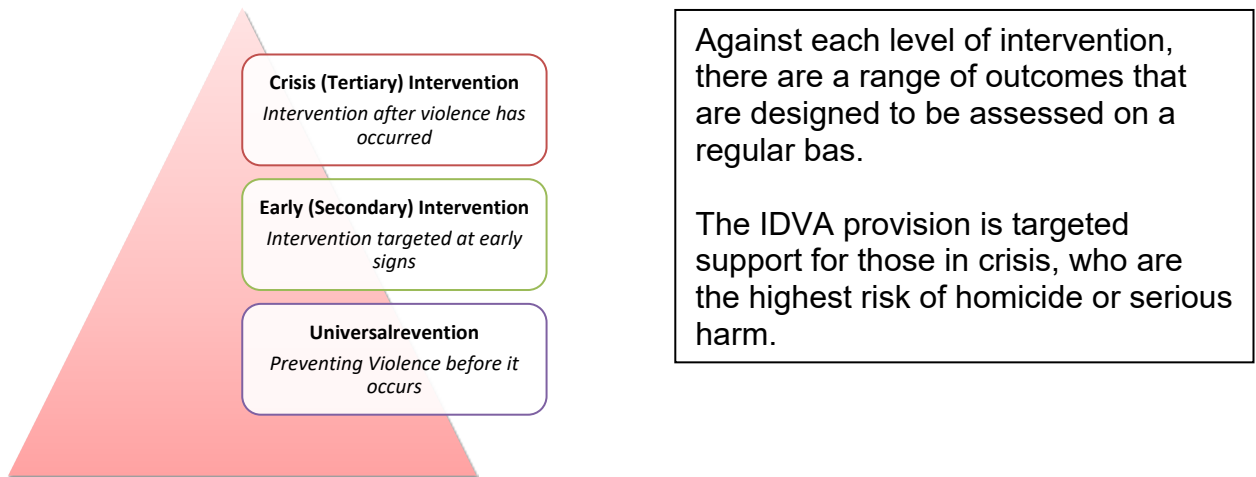
2.32 In response to question about what is needed to break down the barriers, the word cloud below summarises the responses:



2.33 A similar question about the best services from statutory/and or voluntary agencies firmly placed advocacy services at the heart of being the best service.

Strategy

2.34 The overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy noted at 2.7 is based upon a public health prevention approach to domestic abuse, that reflects local need, current best practice and statutory guidance. The strategy includes universal prevention, early intervention and crisis intervention.



2.34 The strategy should align with other Council’s strategies including the Early Help Strategy and with priorities in the new Corporate Plan. The strategy should be multi-agency where possible.

Summary of Why the IDVA Service is Required

2.35 Specialist advocacy services are essential to the safety of victims/survivors and their children, to provide the safety planning and risk management that risks personal harm/homicide and cost to services.

2.36 Whilst a domestic abuse needs assessment has been completed, the completion of the Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment and associated Strategy are required to inform future service provision. Pending completion of this strategy, it is recommended that the current IDVA service is continued for a further 12 months.

2.37 The extension will enable the design of a service specification that addresses the identified needs, and fits with the wider strategy. Future options could include potential integration of domestic abuse commissioned services such as advocacy and emergency accommodation to one strategic development partner.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

Base Budget funding, costs and risks

3.1.1 The IDVA service current contract is funded from a total budget of £253,700 for 2023-24.

3.1.2 The contract value commenced at a value of £263,268.24 in 2018/19 and included planned reductions in subsequent years. For 2022/23 the contract was set at a value of £214,443 per annum in accordance with the service specification. Given cost pressures and noting the provider has been managing considerable caseload pressures a 5.7% inflationary award was made for 2023/24 and it is proposed to keep this uplifted value through the 12-month extension and yet not to increase further at this stage. This remains within the overall budget.

Financial Year	Contract Values £
2018-2019	263,268
2019-2020	263,268
2020-2021	230,042
2021-2022	214,443
2022-2023	214,443
2023-2024 (End Dec)	170,000
Total Contract Value	1,355,465
Extend:1 year to 31/12/24	226,667
Revised Contract Value	1,582,132

3.1.3 The overall budget position of the recommended decision is shown in the table immediately below and is within the current budget;

Budget Impact - Extension			
Financial year	Contract	Budget*	Underspend
2023/24 Full year	226,667	253,700	(27,033)
2024/25 (9 months budget and costs only)	170,000	190,275	(20,275)

- 3.1.4 2023/24 includes 5.7% contract uplift already agreed and 3 months of the extension proposed and recommended in option C. The budget for 2024/25 is shown as a pro rata for 9 months to align with the contract extension. The further report and strategy will inform the later decision as to further procurements of an ongoing IDVA service for commencement 1/1/2026. It should be noted that this is for comparison purposes only, due to the work that is needed to reconsider our provision from 1/1/2026.
- 3.1.5 The council receives an annual government grant of £348,559 for 2024/25 (and £355,136 for 2025/26) which is used for provision of support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation. This grant is specifically in regard to support when IN accommodation which restricts use for the IDVA service. It would be more difficult to run and signpost to the accommodation provision without the IDVA service operating in full though. There are funds from prior years still available of £202,455. Consideration must be given to how these funds are best utilised to ensure that best value is achieved in delivering a complete IDVA service and this has to form part of the review that is reported to cabinet in March 2024.
- 3.1.6 The total value of extensions is £396,666.40 consisting of the 9 months of 2023/24 to December and the 12 months to December 2024/25. Which represents less than 34% of the original contracts and therefore is within regulations and below 40%. There is a small risk of challenge from other providers by awarding this extension, however, the existing market for service provision is narrow and this has to be the final extension given.
- 3.1.7 If options A or B (which are not recommended) are chosen then as well as other risks mentioned above, there are clear potential risks that there may be other costs and impacts on the wider council services. For instance potential impacts in social work teams both in Children's and Adults may occur if IDVA's are not in place. The management of the existing grant and accommodation and other resources may become less effective (compounding the general lack of local refuge accommodation). This would require further detailed work to identify issues and plan out possible systems to manage and mitigate. It is unlikely that impacts will all be mitigated. If options A or B are chosen then service officers will need to urgently commence such work in detail. The obvious budget saving on an annual basis of either A or B would be the current contract value, however this is not the recommended course given the likelihood of creating pressures in other budgets and cost the council more overall.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act sets out statutory responsibilities on relevant authorities. This includes convening a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, assessing the need for, preparing and publishing strategies and commissioning support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation services in their areas.
- 3.2.2 The legislation also states that 'the relevant authority must keep under review any effect of the strategy on the provision of other local authority support in its area'.¹ This is important in respect of services such as advocacy as these are linked to, but not specifically designed for, those living in safe accommodation.

¹ Source: [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

- 3.2.3 The Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance is intended to increase awareness and inform the response to domestic abuse and conveys standards and promotes best practice. This has provided a useful reference for the council in designing its approach to tackling domestic abuse.
- 3.2.4 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 creates a serious violence duty requiring local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities and others to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those issues. Domestic abuse features within that duty.
- 3.2.5 Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires public bodies in a local authority area to formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities when making decisions on the exercise of its functions to have due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area, the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.
- 3.2.6 Safer Slough Partnership has agreed that domestic abuse and serious violence are local priorities.

The current contract with Hestia can be extended for 12 month period under Regulation 72(1)(b) (Modifications of contracts during their term) of the Public Contracts Act 2015. A notice will be published setting out the required details of the modification.

3.3 Risk management implications

Risk	Rating	Mitigation	Residual risk
Service disruption – in the event of cessation of the IDVA services	High	Engagement with local voluntary organisations, and national domestic abuse services. A comprehensive communications plan across partners and communities to appraise them of service availability and alternative support pathways. Revised systems and mitigations will be needed and an impact review as to other teams and areas of the council. Workflows around the existing grant and accommodation will need revising.	High
Public perception and/or confusion as to service provision.	Medium	A comprehensive engagement and communications plan to ensure that communities and partners are aware of new arrangements and to	Low

Risk	Rating	Mitigation	Residual risk
		allay any concerns as to service provision.	
Service disruption – transfer of services, current clients, and prospective clients in the period of transition from old to new provider	Medium	A comprehensive project plan, that builds upon the phased plan outlined at Appendix B. This will involve engagement with partners, communications with current clients, and a wide-ranging communications plan.	Low
The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 (CDA98) requires each authority to exercise its functions to prevent crime and disorder.	Medium	Slough has a robust and effective Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) in place to fulfil this function. The commissioning of domestic abuse services forms an integral part of the approach to domestic abuse, that is an SSP priority. Domestic abuse reports are submitted on a quarterly basis providing strategic oversight.	Low

3.4 Environmental implications [Mandatory]

3.4.1 There are no immediate implications, though the planned recommissioning of services to start in January 2025 will ensure environmental considerations and carbon footprint are embedded in the invitation to tender and service specification.

3.5 Equality implications [Mandatory]

3.5.1 In accordance with the public sector equality duty, an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken, and is provided as **Appendix B**. The findings of this EIA will inform the final service specification.

3.6 Corporate parenting implications

3.6.1 The seven principles of corporate parenting² will inform the design and service specification design for future domestic abuse services. Children’s social care are an integral part of the team looking at options for designing the specification.

3.7 Procurement implications [Discretionary]

3.7.1 The recommissioning of advocacy service from 2025 will be procured in full compliance with the council’s Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts

² Source: [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114112/2019-07-16-Applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers.pdf) (Accessed November 2023)

Regulations 2015. Officers will engage both the council's procurement team and HB Public Law early in the recommissioning timetable to advise on the procurement and required contractual documentation.

3.8 Property implications

- 3.8.1 At the current time Slough Borough Council own three properties representing 14 bed spaces which are leased to the DASH Charity as refuge accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse and are part of the national refuge referral system which offers reciprocal arrangements across the UK. Two of the properties were purchased with funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005 with the express conditions that they were used for refuge purposes. The third was already owned by highways.
- 3.8.2 The lease arrangement is currently being reviewed in terms of the continuation of the leases and our future commissioning plans for domestic abuse Safe Accommodation plans as these properties are due to have their leases renewed in the near future.
- 3.8.2 Once the position on leases is understood, this will inform service specification design options.

4. Background Papers

None *[or list background papers]*

Appendix A – Service Provision

This is not an exhaustive list.

Intervention Level	Description	Funding Source	End Date
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Advocacy Specialist Service (Hestia)	SBC	31/12/2023
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Advocacy Over 55 (DASH)	MOJ via OPCC	31/03/2025
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Advocacy Diverse Community (DASH)	MOJ via OPCC	31/03/2025
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Advocacy (Wexham Park Hospital)	Frimley Trust	ongoing
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Complex Needs Advocacy (Hestia) Ealing/Harrow Partnership)	DHLUC via SBC	31/03/2024
Crisis / Secondary	Sanctuary Scheme (Target Hardening) Housing	SBC Housing	ongoing
Crisis / Secondary	Refuge Provision (DASH)	DHLUC via SBC	31/03/2024
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Stalking Service (Aurora New Dawn)	OPCC	31/03/2025
Crisis / Secondary	Specialist Sexual Violence Service (Thames Valley Partnership)	OPCC	31/03/24
Crisis / Secondary	The Solace Centre (SARC based in Slough)	Multiple	ongoing
Early / Secondary	Building better relationships (Probation) court appointed intervention via criminal justice system	MOJ	Ongoing
Early / Secondary	Shine Project (Children First)	DLUCH and SCF	31/03/2024
Early / Secondary	Family Support (Children First)	SCF	Ongoing
Early / Secondary	1:1 Perpetrator Worker	SCF	Ongoing
Early / Secondary	BRAVE Project (Psychological Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse)	OPCC	31/03/2025
Early / Secondary	Psycho-educational Programme (Hestia)	SBC	31/12/2023
Early / Secondary	SAFE! Project (Support for Children as victims of domestic abuse)	OPCC	31/03/2025
Early / Secondary	Sehali Project (Support for South Asian women)	SBC	31/12/2023
Early / Secondary	Safety Planner (via Victim First Hub)	OPCC	Ongoing
Early / Secondary	SAFE! Project (Support for Children as victims of domestic abuse)	DHLUC via SBC	31/03/2024
Early / Secondary	Emotional Support & Counselling Service (via Victim First Hub)	OPCC	Counselling is ongoing. VFESS is 31/03/24
Universal	School based Emotional Coaching (For staff)	OPCC	31/03/2024
Universal	Telephone Helpline (via Victim First Hub)	OPCC	Ongoing
Universal	Choices Programme (Healthy Relationships Schools)	OPCC	31/03/2024
Universal	Free Legal Advice (via Victim First Hub)	OPCC	31/03/2025

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

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

Title	Domestic abuse advocacy / support services
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? What results are intended? 	<p>The current domestic abuse advocacy and support services contract ends on 31st December 2023.</p> <p>This analysis is based upon a current needs assessment that is being used to design the service specification/requirements that providers will be invited to tender for.</p> <p>The decision to proceed with the invitation to tender or not, will therefore affect victims of domestic abuse in the future.</p> <p>The needs assessment and this analysis make comments in respect of under and over-represented sections of the community.</p> <p>The result is (a) to clearly identify challenges, and (b) ensure that the service specification clearly states intent to provide accessible services and work with other agencies working in the space of ‘domestic abuse service provision’.</p>
Details of the lead person completing the screening/EIA	<p>(i) Full Name: Mark Wolski / Garry Tallett</p> <p>(ii) Position:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Mark Wolski – Community Safety Partnership Manager</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Garry Tallet - Group Manager – Community Safety, Housing Regulation & Enforcement</p> <p>(iii) Unit: Place & Community Directorate</p> <p>(iii) Contact Details: Mark.Wolski@slough.gov.uk</p>
Date sent to Finance	04/09/2023
Version number and date of update	V2 – 04/09/2023

You will need to update your EIA as you move through the decision-making process. Record the version number here and the date you updated the EIA. Keep all versions so you have evidence that you have considered equality throughout the process. However only the most updated version will be saved in the Equalities SharePoint folder.

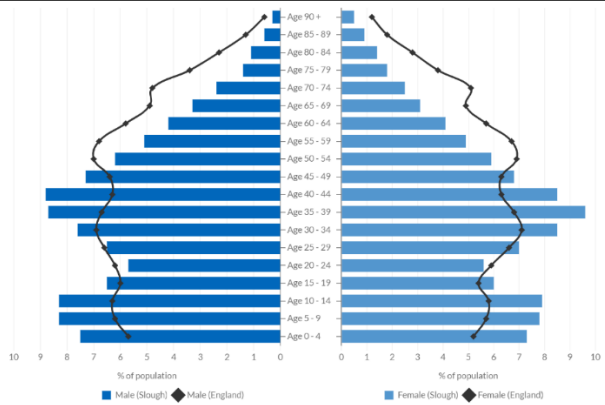
SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

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

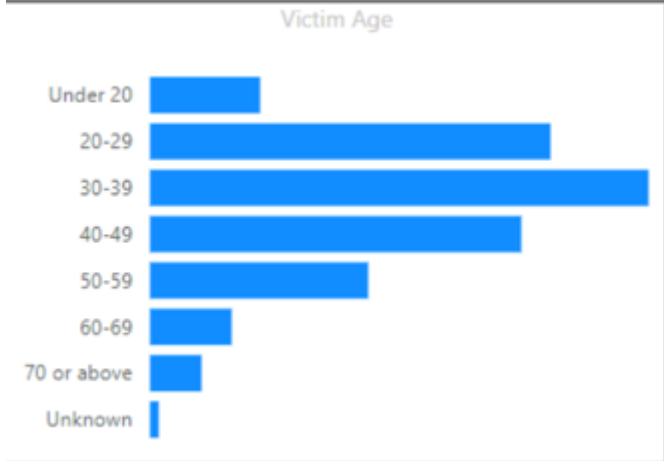
<p>2.1</p>	<p>Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends, or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i> <i>Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal.</i> 		
<p>Equality Characteristic</p>	<p>Current or expected make up of service users</p>	<p>Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?</p>	
<p>Gender</p>	<p>75% women 25% male</p> <p>This mirrors national trends.</p> <p>An analysis of DHRs reveals gendered victimisation across both intimate partner and familial homicides with females representing the majority of victims and males representing the majority of perpetrators. 3 Women’s aid report, “There are important differences between male violence against women and female violence against men, namely the amount, severity, and impact. Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt (Walby & Towers, 2017; Walby & Allen, 2004) or killed than male victims of domestic abuse (ONS, 2020A; ONS, 2020B)”.</p>	<p>Over-represented</p>	
<p>Ethnicity</p>	<p><u>Police crime recorded data</u> is not reliable. <u>Police MARAC data</u> shows broad correlation. <u>Service user data</u> shows that Black and Minority Ethnic are expected to reflect the borough profile (BAME 54.3%).</p> <p>Service user data shows c30% Asian and c6% Black</p> <p>One would expect higher rates of representation, given national figures/trends.</p> <p>“The Crime Survey of England and Wales showed that those in the Mixed ethnic group were significantly more likely to</p>	<p>Under-represented</p>	

³ Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575232/HO-Domestic-Homicide-Review-Analysis-161206.pdf (Accessed October 2021)

	<p>experience domestic abuse within the last year than those in the Black or Asian ethnic groups” Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</p>	
Disability	<p><u>Police crime recorded data</u> is not reliable. <u>Police MARAC data and Service User data</u> shows disabled victims are under-represented versus the 11.3% of adult Slough residents reporting a disability.</p> <p>MARAC data shows 1% of cohort were disabled.</p> <p>Service user data shows c7% reported a disability.</p> <p>The Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that men and women aged 16 to 74 years with a disability¹ were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those without. Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England, and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</p>	Under-represented
Sexual orientation	<p><u>Police crime recorded data</u> is not reliable. <u>Police MARAC data and Service User data</u> shows under-representation for groups that are not heterosexual.</p> <p><u>Slough population</u> Heterosexual: 88.2%, LGB+: 3.2% Gay or Lesbian: 1.5%, Bisexual:1.3%, Pansexual: 0.3%</p> <p>MARAC data shows 1.6% of cohort were LGBT.</p> <p>Service user data showed very low percentile representation. Eg. Dip sample of three quarters worth of data from Hestia, only two clients from around 400 were from LGBT.</p> <p>Academic research indicates higher rates of domestic abuse in LGBTQ+ communities, such as “In a US study “Violent Victimization by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017–2020”, it reported ‘The rate of violent victimization of lesbian or gay persons (43.5 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 16 or older) was more than two times the rate for straight persons (19.0 per 1,000)” Violent Victimization by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017–2020 (ojp.gov)</p>	Under-represented
Age	<p>The two charts below show the population profile for Slough and the victim profile for domestic abuse.</p> <p>Whilst arguably the profile is broadly representative to age 60, it is less clear over 70, where further examination of victim profile is required.</p>	<p>Whilst exact data is currently being produced, the graphical representations indicate that elderly populations are under-represented within the victim profile</p>



Victim Profile



for domestic abuse.

This would reflect academic research that indicates systemic invisibility of the elderly when considering DA.

Religion or belief

It is expected that the demographic of service users reflects the Slough population levels. Neither the police, MARAC nor service provider captures this information.

Slough Borough Make Up

- Christian 32%
- Muslim 29.4%
- No religion 13.1%
- Sikh 11.3%
- Hindu 7.8%
- Not answered 5.4%
- Other religion 0.5%
- Jewish
- 0.1%

Whilst victim data is not captured, attention is drawn to the ethnic make up of the borough where certain groups are under-represented across MARAC and service user profiles.

Under-represented

Gender Identity

It is expected that the demographic of service users at least, reflects the Slough population levels. Neither the police, MARAC nor service provider captures this information.

- As registered at birth 93.5%
- Trans woman 0.2%
- Trans man 0.1%
- Non-binary 0.1%

Under-represented

		<p>Academic research suggests that those whose sexual identity is different from that at birth, face additional barriers and isolation from seeking support as victims of domestic abuse. In an article Domestic Violence in the Transgender Community “Transgender people may face unique barriers in seeking help for domestic violence. According to the Williams Institute report, they may experience: The risk of rejection and isolation from family and friends if they “out” themselves” Domestic Violence in the Transgender Community (domesticshelters.org)</p>	
	Pregnancy/Maternity	<p>It is expected that the demographic of service users reflects the Slough population levels. Neither the police, MARAC nor service provider captures this information.</p> <p>Whilst data is not captured, there is academic research, and it is professionally accepted that pregnant women are statistically more likely to be a victim of domestic abuse, hence the common practice for routine screening in health environments.</p>	Over-represented
	Marriage/Civil Partnership	<p>Neither the police, MARAC nor service provider captures this information.</p> <p>The Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that adults aged 16 to 74 years who were separated or divorced were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than those who were married or civil partnered, cohabiting, single or widowed. Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England, and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</p> <p>Harmful traditional practices including Forced Marriage data is captured by the current provider, with low rates. (1% of case load)</p> <p>Studies show that forced marriage is a challenge in South Asian communities, and therefore one may expect to see further cases in Slough.</p>	Representative – see comments opposite

2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate

Yes, please see details above at 2.1 for greater detail.

- 1) Gender,
- 2) Pregnancy/Maternity,
- 3) Marriage – in terms of forced marriage

<p><i>impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</i></p>																															
<p>2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.</p>	<p>Yes, please see details above at 2.1 for greater detail.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ethnicity, 2) Disability, 3) Sexual orientation, 4) Religion or Belief, 5) Gender identity 																														
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?</p>																														
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>None</th> <th>Positive</th> <th>Negative</th> <th>Not sure</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Men or women</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disabled⁴ people (consider different types of physical, learning, or mental disabilities)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>People of particular sexual orientation/s</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>People in particular age groups (consider in</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		None	Positive	Negative	Not sure	Men or women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disabled ⁴ people (consider different types of physical, learning, or mental disabilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People of particular sexual orientation/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People in particular age groups (consider in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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People in particular age groups (consider in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																											

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

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

2.5	Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy, or proposal
	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	The detail at 2.1 identifies a number of local challenges for populations of different protected characteristics, whether under or over-represented.

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

SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

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

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented.	What, if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men	X	X				The service specification will require accessibility for male victims	
	Women		X				The service specification recognises the gendered nature of domestic abuse	
Race	White					X		
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	X	X	X			The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services	

	Asian/Asian British	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	
	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	
	Gypsies / travellers	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	

	Other ethnic group	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require and be informed by further break down and understanding of Black African populations such as the Somali population. Specifically, the service specification will seek to address intersectionality of other themes, such as mental health and poverty.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	
Disability	Physical	X	X				<p>Research will be required in respect of types of disability, in order to understand impact/effect on survivors of disability.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p>	

							Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.	
	Sensory	X	X				As above	
	Learning Difficulties	X	X				As above	
	Learning Disabilities	X	X				As above	
	Mental Health	X	X				As above	

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require services that are accessible to all clients with varied protected characteristics including sexual orientation.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	
Age	Older people (50+)	X	X	X				
	Younger people (16 - 25)	X	X	X				
	Children (under 16)	X	X	X				

Gender Reassignment	X	X	X		<p>The service specification will require services that are accessible to all clients with varied protected characteristics including those who have undergone gender reassignment.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>	
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Impact due to pregnancy/maternity	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require services that are accessible to all clients with varied protected characteristics, including those who are pregnant and undergoing fertility treatment.</p> <p>The service specification will require the service to engage with and build positive relations with health services, in particular, maternity departments, and GP practices.</p> <p>Specialist organisations will be invited to form part of a community domestic abuse forum.</p> <p>Pathways to specialist organisations will be made very clear.</p>
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	X	X	X			<p>The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services, and a programme of community engagement including with different faith groups</p>

People on low incomes	X	X	X			The service specification will require seeking ways of working in areas of high deprivation, such as one-stop shops, or via other accessible public services.	
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SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

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

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

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
The service specification will require accessibility for male victims, but also to work with all other specialist agencies that work in Slough	Gender (Men)	Service accessible to men, with higher rates of men seeking assistance	Nil additional	Rachel Axtell Rachle.Axtell@slough.gov.uk Community Safety Slough	01.03.2024	
The service specification will require culturally sensitive and accessible services, but also to work with all other specialist agencies that work in Slough. Local culturally sensitive DA services will be consulted on specification. Best practice in commissioning culturally	Race/Faith	Service accessible to all races of Slough Proportion of service users will be representative of population	Nil additional		01.03.2024	

	sensitive services will be sought						
	<p>The service specification will require services that are accessible to all clients with varied protected characteristics, including disability.</p> <p>Research and advice will be sought in regard to the various 'themes' of disability, in writing the service specification.</p>	Disability	<p>Service accessible to all communities of Slough</p> <p>Proportion of service users will be representative of population</p>	Nil additional		01.03.2024	
	The service specification will require services that are accessible to all clients with varied protected characteristics including sexual orientation.	Sexual Orientation	<p>Service accessible to all communities of Slough</p> <p>Proportion of service users will be representative of population</p>	Nil additional		01.03.2024	
	<p>Exact comparison of population versus victim breakdown required.</p> <p>The service specification will require capacity to work across all age groups, but also to work with all other specialist agencies that work in Slough</p>	Age	<p>Service accessible to all communities of Slough</p> <p>Proportion of service users will be representative of population</p>	Nil additional		01.03.2024	
	The service specification will require capacity to work	Gender Reassignment	Service accessible to all communities of Slough	Nil additional		01.03.2024	

	across communities, but also to work with all other specialist agencies that work in Slough, and in particular clinicians such as GPs		Proportion of service users will be representative of population				
	<p>The service specification will require capacity to work with all women, but also to work with all other specialist agencies that work in Slough, and in particular clinicians within maternity units and GPs.</p> <p>Service provider specification will require training inputs to clinical staff, to encourage 'routine enquiry'</p>	Pregnancy	<p>Service accessible to all communities of Slough</p> <p>Policy changes in due course across GP practices.</p>	Nil additional		01.03.2024	

Appendix C Timetable

Phase	Activity	Outcome	Deadline
1	Understanding service demand and need in Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Needs Assessment (NA) ▪ Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) ▪ Public Survey/Consultation 	End January 2023 (Complete)
2	Agreeing strategic partnership approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership DA Strategy 	End October 2023 <i>(Complete, to SSP January 2024)</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council Safer Accommodation DA Strategy 	End November 2023
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serious Violence Strategy Draft 	End November 2023
3	Design of service specification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Design Options for Specification ▪ Ensuring EINA observations accounted for 	End January 2024
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Specification Agreed 	Mid-March 2024
4	Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safer Accommodation Needs Assessment and Strategy and decision paper on further procurement for commencement 2025. 	Mid-March 2024
5	Finalise Procurement Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supplier warm up, ▪ PIN notice 	End April 2024
6	Market warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage prospective providers. ▪ Warm up event ▪ Procurement system intention 	Mid-May 2024
7	Invitation to tender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Includes qualitative questionnaire 	End May 2024
8	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On written submission ▪ On Presentation ▪ Tender evaluation report 	Mid-August 2024
9	Award of contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preferred provider awarded contract. ▪ Appeal period ▪ Commence fortnightly project mobilisation meetings 	End August 2024
10	Mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop implementation plan. ▪ Develop communication plan. ▪ Manage HR and TUPE ▪ Agree working arrangements (People & Place) 	September 2024
11	Go live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Daily meetings for two weeks. ▪ Weekly meetings for eight weeks ▪ Monthly meetings for three months 	1 st January 2025

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RELEVANT SERVICE MANAGER

FULL NAME: Ketan Gandhi.....

SERVICE AREA: Place Regulation.....

EMAIL: ketan.gandhi@slough.gov.uk.....

DATE (DD/MM/YYYY): 6/01/2023.....

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 December 2023
SUBJECT:	Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Bedi – Lead Member for Education and Children’s Services
CHIEF OFFICER:	Stephen Brown – Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sarah Wilson – Assistant Director Legal and Governance
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	Appendix A - SCF Draft Business and Improvement Plan 2024-25 Appendix B – Proposed new contractual KPIs

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Slough Children First (SCF) Business and Improvement Plan for 2024 to 2025 (Appendix A). 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 2024 to 2025 at Appendix A.
- Approve the amended contractual key performance indicators at Appendix B and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children’s Services, Lifelong Skills and Governance, to make minor amendments to these indicators, including agreeing changes to the measures.

- Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children’s Services, to make amendments to the Articles of Association in relation to the board composition, quorum and reserved matters.
- Note that the contract sum for 2024/25 will be considered and approved as part of the Council’s budget setting process.
- Note that it has been agreed that SCF will not submit an Annual Report for 2022/23.

Reason:

SCF requires a high quality, long-term Business and Improvement Plan setting out its strategic priorities and financial strategy. In September 2023 the Council approved a 3 year plan and this is the Year 2 update. This plan does not cover a new 3 year period, as the contract terminates in September 2026.

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 approve an amended suite of contractual key performance indicators. These focus on areas such as contribution to partnership arrangements, workforce strategy, ensuring effective participation of children and young people and financial performance, in addition to some existing indicators around quality of practice.

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.

Commissioner Review

The DfE commissioner has been consulted on this report and has noted his thanks for the work undertaken on reviewing and updating the contractual performance indicators. The commissioner fully endorses the approach taken by the Council and feels confident that this will provide a much more useful monitoring framework for Council officers and elected members. The commissioner looks forward to seeing how the work progresses over the next few months to ensure it aligns with his work on supporting the Council and SCF to improve the services to a good standard.

The DLUHC commissioners welcome the timely production of the business plan outlining how the company will make progress on its key commitments within the financial year 2024/25 and a financial outlook to 2026/27. The performance framework appended sets out

the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that demonstrates the impact on children, young people and families, the company, and the council.

The Cabinet Report include recommendations approving the company business plan. The focus on quality of practice, delivering maximum effectiveness, efficiency and value for money and the management of its strategic risks, needs to be continuous and clearly outlined in the business plan. If the business plan includes anything which constitutes a reserved matter which is not expressly approved in the Cabinet Report recommendations, it will not be deemed approved and separate authority or Shareholder approval will be needed in the future. The annual Budget request is subject to approval by Full Council 7 March 2024 as part of the wider council budget and the outcome will provide the financial envelope which will underpin this business plan.

Options Considered

2.3. The following options were considered:

Option	Pros	Cons	Recommended
Option 1: Approval of business and improvement plan and updated contractual key performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance with Articles of Association. • Ensures SCF has a longer-term business strategy to manage its services. • The new plan will be owned by SCF Chief Executive and Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan assumes funding that has not been agreed by the Council and may put pressure on other services. 	Recommended
Option 2: Approve the Business and Improvement Plan, but do not amend the contractual key performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits for approving the business and improvement plan are set out under Option 1. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current contractual key performance indicators are almost entirely focused on quality of children’s social care services. • A failure to measure financial performance, partnership working, participation of children and young people and workforce strategy risks SCF not considering its legal responsibilities in terms of best value and cooperation with other agencies. This in turn limits opportunities for SCF to work as part of a wider system to improve services for children and young people. 	Not recommended
Option 3: Not approve the business and improvement plan or amended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business and improvement plan for 2023 will continue to apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a missed opportunity to review and approve an up to date plan. • SCF will be failing to meet its contractual and governance obligations to have an up to date business 	Not recommended

contractual key performance indicators		plan and may need to seek approval for decisions that are not in accordance with the 2023 plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCF will need to report against the existing contractual performance indicators, which will take additional resource and arguably not add as much value as reporting against a more appropriate set of indicators. 	
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Background

- 2.4. SCF's objects are set out in its Articles of Association. The business and improvement plan builds on last year's plan, confirming that the 2024/25 year will focus on driving forward business re-design and invest to save projects to create further improvements, efficiencies and value for money. The overarching ambition remains that services are much improved and being delivered to Ofsted's definition of Good by the next Ofsted inspection.
- 2.5. In the last year there has been significant change in the leadership and management of children's services, with the appointment of a new executive team in SCF, including the Chief Executive who also acts as the statutory Director of Children's Services and Council's Executive Director of Children's Services. A new council non-executive director comes with experience of financial management in a children's company and a new Chair of the Board is an experienced former local authority chief executive. These appointments have collectively strengthened the leadership of SCF. This was an area which Ofsted found to be inadequate in its previous inspection and this concerted effort by the Council and SCF, working with commissioners in DLUHC and the DfE, addresses these concerns and is expected to lead to better business planning and a more robust financial framework.
- 2.6. It is important to recognise that leadership includes political ownership and work has been undertaken to strengthen elected members role in strategy development and corporate parenting. The contractual key performance indicators, whilst directed as SCF, are as much as ensuring political ownership and effectiveness as they are about officer leadership.

Business and Improvement Plan

- 2.7. The financial update in the plan confirms that the 2024/25 contract sum is assumed to be £39.042m. This is a reduction of approximately £1.4m from the 2023/24 increased contract sum and is to be achieved by a combination of managing inflationary growth and delivering efficiency savings. The efficiency savings are intended to be delivered by managing down the cost of placements due to reduced number of children requiring these, reduced legal fees due to reduction in number of proceedings and better management of cases. The 2024/25 contract sum request is less than that presented in September 2023 and the SCF Board has stated its intention to undertake a more detailed review of the risks and deliverability of the proposals. The increased contract sum will be considered and formally agreed as part of the Council's budget setting process in February / March 2024. The contract

sum includes an assumption for a pay award in 2024/25. The service delivery contract confirms that such an award should be estimated, but that the actual funding for this will only be paid once the award is agreed. This replicates the arrangement for internal council departments and requires the Council to ensure it makes adequate provision to cover these costs and to distribute the funding at the point the pay award is agreed.

- 2.8. The plan also updates on plans for 2025/26 and sets out aspirations to make further financial efficiencies based on current projects. Due to the nature of some of this work, the savings will not be delivered immediately. For example it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in the number of children subject to care proceedings, however the savings attributed to this will be delivered in 2025/26 and beyond.
- 2.9. It is important to consider quality of service and financial performance together, as improving the services will lead to cost efficiencies. For example, the plan focuses on supporting families at an earlier stage and stepping down children in need plans to either an early help team or to community partners and the focus on “edge of care” leads to children not coming into care or being reunified with their families.
- 2.10. Placement costs form a significant proportion of SCF’s expenditure, second only to staffing costs. Like many other commissioned services, the unit cost of these is expected to increase, although this is offset by an anticipated drop in the overall number of placements required. On a medium to long term basis, SCF is working with the Council to look into the feasibility of establishing an in-house residential facility, although there is no detailed business case for this as yet.
- 2.11. The target of increasing the number of foster carers in 2023/24 is expected to be met and a further 3 new carers is targeted for 2024/25.
- 2.12. The plan refers to a stable workforce as being critical and that the current strategy is working with a ratio of 77:23 permanent to agency/vacant.

Governance and contractual requirements for approval of the business plan

- 2.13. 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.
- 2.14. 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.

- 2.15. Since February 2014, Slough Children's Services have been subject to intervention from the Department for Education. The draft Business and Improvement Plan for 2024 contains an improvement plan with 7 enablers, including strategic approach, engaging partners, ensuring children's voice and influence and fostering innovation. These areas have been considered in resetting the contractual key performance indicators.

Contractual performance indicators

- 2.16. The existing contractual performance indicators are very focused on children's social care measures and there are limited measures on workforce, none relating to youth justice, financial performance, partnership working or ensuring participation from children and young people.
- 2.17. Appendix B sets out a list of proposed new contractual measures. As some of these are more nuanced and focuses on SCF working within a wider system, the measures are less prescriptive and will be assessed on an annual basis, although progress against them will be monitored throughout the year. Performance against these measures should be included in the Annual Report which will be presented to Cabinet in future years.
- 2.18. Examples of indicators linked to partnership working including the effectiveness of the corporate parenting panel and scrutiny functions, the effectiveness of statutory partnerships and inter-agency working. SCF has a key role to play in ensuring the wider system works effectively and that there is political ownership for improving children's services across this wider system. There have been LGA peer reviews on corporate parenting and youth justice and these alongside finding and recommendations from regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, can be used to measure improvements.
- 2.19. Performance indicators related to governance include a requirement to comply with contractual requirements and effectively contribute to contract monitoring processes, effective commissioning strategies and business improvement, as well as an effective risk management system. These will be measured as part of existing contract monitoring arrangements and against the improvement plans contained within the Business and Improvement Plan.
- 2.20. It is proposed that there are new measures relating to workforce and culture, which include the need to demonstrate a listening and learning culture which leads to outcomes focused improvements and the need for effective supervision and a diverse workforce.
- 2.21. Quality of practice measures have been amended to ensure an appropriate focus on quality assurance processes and measures relating to the participation and influence of children, young people and their families. The latter includes participation in formal looked after child reviews and in care experienced young people being actively involved in pathway planning for further education, employment and training. It also includes a measure on the involvement of children and young people at a strategic level.
- 2.22. Financial management and sustainability measures have been included to cover short-term and medium term sustainability and evidence of value for money.

Articles of Association

- 2.23. SCF's Articles of Association set out the requirements for board composition, reserved matters for the Council as sole owner of the company and other constitutional matters. The current board composition is an independent Chair, up to three independent non-executive directors, up to three Council non-executive directors, the SCF Chief Executive and up to two additional executive directors. Earlier in the year there was discussion about amending the rules of board composition to increase the number of independent non-executive directors by one and reducing the Council directors by one. This will result in SCF has an even number of independent non-executive directors compared to other directors, whilst still providing the Council with an influence on the board.
- 2.24. Other proposed changes include clarifying that Council directors should be an elected member, officer or employee of the Council and should not be remunerated save as provided by their terms of engagement, election or employment, that the quorum rules should be amended to remove the requirement for a Council director to be present for a board meeting to be quorate and making minor changes to the Audit Committee requirements.
- 2.25. It is also proposed to review the list of reserved matters and include the need for Council authority to enter into a contract in excess of £500,000 unless this is within the scope of the Service Delivery Contract or Business Plan.
- 2.26. These changes represent best practice and are proposed in response to a detailed governance review. Discussions are taking place on the detail of the amendments and it is proposed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to allow this to be progressed.

Annual Report

- 2.27. The change in personnel at SCF at executive leadership and board level has meant that no annual report was presented for the financial year 2022/23. Due to time pressures and a need to focus on future performance, a decision was taken by the Strategic Commissioning Group that the requirement to submit an annual report for 2022/23 be waived.
- 2.28. Schedule 3 of the service delivery contract requires SCF to submit an annual report to allow the strategic commissioning group to conduct an annual review of the arrangements. This report should be submitted by 30 June each year and should contain prescribed information, including:
- (a) a summary of performance against the KPIs;
 - (b) a summary of cost against budget;
 - (c) a summary of demand analysis against assumptions made;
 - (d) projections of demand for the next two financial years;
 - (e) the strategic priorities and outcomes;
 - (f) a summary of social, demographic and other relevant factors which affected delivery of the services and may affect future delivery;
 - (g) the results of audits and surveys carried out;
 - (h) the outcome of regulatory inspections.
- 2.29. As the KPIs were in the process of review and further work was needed on the business and improvement plan for 2023, which had also been submitted later than

required in the contract, it was agreed that the time spent to submit an annual report for the previous financial year would be better spent on ensuring that the contractual requirements are met in future years.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

3.1.1 In September 2023, Cabinet approved an increase in funding for SCF for 2023/24 of £4.447m increasing the contract sum to £40.514m. The latest budget monitoring figures indicate that SCF is projected to keep within its budget and not require any additional in-year financial support. There is still a risk based on the September 2023 management accounts report, which flags a year to date loss. There are particular risks around legal costs and placement costs. These are being monitored closely and income assurances from the Home Office and the availability of public health grant will help to mitigate the overall risk. Of the savings projected to be delivered, SCF is on track to deliver two thirds of these and has identified additional savings from the placements budget and additional income maximisation to offset those savings which are not on track.

3.1.2 Caseloads in the current financial year are lower than projected, which gives some assurance in relation to future savings, however caseloads do fluctuate throughout the year and it would be preferable to see a full year's figures to test the assumptions. Whilst there have been improvements in permanent recruitment (82% permanent across whole workforce and 74% permanent across caseholding social workers as at September 2023) the agency costs are above budget due to additional capacity at head of service level. A reduction in the number of children presenting for asylum has led to an underspend against forecast for placements, alongside tighter management of high cost and external placements via a new placements panel. As a large proportion of the additional savings is projected to come from this area, SCF's executive leadership team will be keeping a focus on this area.

3.1.3 The Council's financial situation it that it requires SCF to contribute to savings requirements in order for the Council to meet its medium term financial strategy. Having realistic projections of the contract sum required for future years and ensuring that SCF does not require in-year adjustments is critical for the Council's financial planning and sustainability. The estimated contract sum for 2024/25 is £39.049m, a reduction of approximately £1.4m from 2023/24. This includes an estimate for the pay award, however the sum of any pay award will only be paid by the Council at the point the award is agreed and this will be paid based on the actual award. Therefore the Council is bearing the risk / benefit of the award being higher or lower than the estimate.

3.1.4 The proposed new contractual performance indicators include indicators around short and medium term financial performance and value for money. This is a significant change for the historic arrangements, when performance was solely measured by reference to quality of practice for children's social care functions.

3.1.5 The Council has provided SCF with a working capital loan of £5m. SCF is due to repay this loan at the end of the contract term in 2026.

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.

3.6 Corporate parenting implications

3.6.1 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out statutory corporate parenting principles which the Council must have regard to when exercising its functions in relation to looked after children and young people. These include acting in their best interests and promoting their physical and mental health and well-being, encouraging the expression of views, wishes and feelings and ensuring these are taken into account, ensuring these children and young people are safe, stable in their home lives, relationships, education and work and preparing them for adulthood and independent living.

3.6.2 The statutory guidance emphasises that these principles must not be seen in a vacuum and should shape the mindset and culture of every part of the local authority and are intended to ensure that councils have high aspirations for children in their care and young people who have experienced being in care.

3.6.3 The proposed new contractual performance indicators are set to take account of the wider system in which SCF operates. For instance there are indicators focusing on ensuring SCF is effective in supporting the Corporate Parenting Panel, supporting effective multi-agency working, including in statutory partnerships and via joint commissioning arrangements and measuring the effectiveness of systems to enable children and young people to participate in decisions affecting them at an operational and strategic level.

4. **Background Papers**

None.



Slough Children's First Business Plan for 2024-25

Building on our vision from our 2023-
26 business plan

2024-25 (Year 2) Update

OWNER

Simon Baker, SCF Chair of
the Board

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

VERSION

0.03

DATE

November 03, 2023



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Observatory House
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Overview from the Board Chair and Chief Executive

We are moving into the second year of our 2023-26 business plan still with a clear vision that children in Slough are **Happy, Thriving, Safe & Loved**.

Slough Borough Council (SBC) continues to face extraordinary financial challenges which are reflected in the Section 114 Notice and continued oversight and scrutiny by Commissioners appointed by DLUHC (the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). Inevitably these financial challenges affect the work of Slough Children First (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 Department for Education (DfE) appointed Commissioner who also scrutinises services for children with SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities).

Year one of our 2023-26 business plan represented bringing SCF into a steady state, focused on improving the quality of practice and building solid foundations on which to deliver our key priorities.

- Priority 1** Children and their families should be able to easily access Early Help and know where to go and who to speak to when they need it.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Priority 5** We will work with our children and young people to enable them to participate and shape services with us.
- 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.

In year 2, and those that follow, we will drive forward business re-design and our 'invest to save' projects that will create further improvements, efficiencies, and value for money.

We know that social care services provided by SCF will be reviewed by Ofsted through their inspection framework in the form of a focused visit or a Joint Area Inspection to review the progress made since the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in January 2023. It remains our ambition to evidence, at that time, that services are much improved and being delivered to Ofsted's definition of a 'Good' standard.

Our Financial Position

As a demand led service our operational costs are driven by the demands made on the services we provide. We are now able to demonstrate the financial position we as a Company are in and how changes in demand and funding contribute to this. As a result our current funding requirement for 2024/25 is as per the agreed Contract Sum of £39.049m and is a £1.465m reduction from the 2023/24 expected requirement.

The Business and Improvement plan delivers a saving off the contract sum, whilst also incurring inflationary growth. Therefore, in order to deliver a balanced budget, circa £2.5m of efficiencies and savings from 23/24 expenditure is required to be found.

Fully reviewing the funding requirements for 2024/25, and monitoring how changes experienced in the last 12 months can be managed within the same funding envelope, we are now forecasting:

- An increase in the cost of placements as even though there are a decrease in the number of placements, an increase in the average weekly rate will lead to an overall increase of £493k
- An increase in the Care Leavers' weekly rate is partly negated by an anticipated reduction in numbers leading to an overall reduction of £138k
- Successful focus work in care proceedings means our legal costs are expected to reduce by circa £200k
- An increase in inflation rates on placements, care leavers, contracts and legal costs to 5% in alignment with SBC
- Staffing changes via reconfigurations
- Separately pay inflation is assumed at 4% in line with SBC
- Additional expected income through reviewing fees and charges and also maximisation of grant funding

Our Profit and Loss Account

The table below shows the projected profit and loss account over the life of this business plan reflecting the amended Core Contract sum (against that previously Sept 2023 cabinet). 2026/27 is a 'new 3rd year' as the three-year cycle moves forward.

	Plan 2023/24 £000's	Plan 2024/25 £000's	Plan 2025/26 £000's	Plan 2026/27 £000's
Income				
SBC Income	(40,514)	(39,049)	(39,022)	(38,183)
SBC other income	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
DFE Income	(853)	(749)	(749)	(749)
Grant Income	(5,142)	(4,981)	(4,251)	(4,408)
Other Income	(1,104)	(1,316)	(1,350)	(1,442)
Total Income	(47,713)	(46,196)	(45,472)	(44,882)
Expenditure				
Pay	20,439	19,645	20,354	20,478
Placements	17,564	16,995	16,026	15,093
Support to children and young	4,531	4,464	4,130	4,402
Legal fees	1,814	1,875	1,739	1,657
Overheads	3,188	3,216	3,224	3,253
Transformation costs	178	0	0	0
Total revenue expenditure	47,714	46,195	45,473	44,883
Revenue (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	0

The overall position is an improvement for 2024/25 with a decrease in the following years. This has come from a 'roll forward' of the original 2023-26 business plan which has then been revised based on actual caseloads and placement data.

Our Demand-Led Service

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. A re-alignment of baseline rates for placements alongside an analysis of actual placement data has led to us to forecast as shown below:

	Forecast 23/24			Budget 24/25			Variance		
	FTE	Rate	Total	FTE	Rate	Total	FTE	Rate	Total
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Children Looked After									
External Residential	20	4,801	4,991	18	5,640	5,234	2	-839	-243
Asylum Seeker 16-18 (Semi-Independent)	50	581	1,514	45	832	1,966	5	-251	-452
Semi Independent < 18's	14	2,161	1,569	15	1,684	1,329	-1	477	240
Secure Remand	1	1,918	100	1	4,725	248	-0	-2,807	-148
Total Children Looked After	85	1,847	8,175	79	2,123	8,778	6	-276	-603
Permanency									
Adoption Allowances	71	226	835	74	236	913	-3	-11	-78
Special Guardianship Order	152	209	1,652	157	203	1,664	-6	6	-12
Permanency total	223	214	2,487	231	213	2,576	-9	1	-89
Fostering									
External Fostering Agency	71	1,159	4,289	70	1,084	3,970	1	75	319
In House Foster Carers	72	412	1,551	67	478	1,670	5	-66	-120
Fostering Total	143	783	5,840	137	788	5,640	6	-6	199
Total Placements	450	702	16,501	448	728	16,995	3	-25	-493
Total Care Leavers	78	587	2,383	68	636	2,245	10	-50	138

Our Plans for 2025/26

Our financial modelling includes the delivery of our improvement plan in Appendix 1 and covers the actions being undertaken in Year 1. 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 focus, 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 make up nearly £1m of income and we will regularly review to ensure maximising this
- Reduction of legal fees requires a shift in culture and practice to reduce reliance on legal 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

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.

Slough maintains a high level in the complexity of needs, children presenting to Slough seeking refuge from unsafe situations in their own countries, a cost-of-living crisis and rising prices. We have also included an increased demographic growth by 1% per year and our higher than the national average of numbers of 0-25 year olds. Our financial model reflects this and incorporates the key activity needed in 2024/25 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 medium-term funding for an additional Targeted Early Help team. In addition to this 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 focus 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 numbers 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). The edge of care focus will also impact legal fees as they will also reduce as the volume of proceedings reduce.

Despite a reduction in the number of placements the total costs are expected to rise following an increase in weekly rates. Therefore work will be expedited to look into the feasibility of establishing an in-house residential facility, along with other transfers to in-house provision.

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 are on target for **six new carers** by the end of year 1 and will target **a further three new carers** by the end of this year 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 to further grow our own sustainable and stable workforce. This has enabled the safe release of two managed agency teams earlier than we had originally thought. Those savings have allowed additional capacity to focus on improving practice and keeping caseloads at a manageable level.

Overall the financial modelling shows that we will break even from 2024/25 onwards, this includes £2.03m of inflation added to Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Income.

Our Balance Sheet

SCF's balance sheet shows that following September's Cabinet agreement to fund previous in-year losses of £5.3m we are demonstrating a balanced position from 2023/4 onwards.

Slough Children First Ltd

Balance Sheet	as at 31 Mar 2023	as at 31 Mar 2024	as at 31 Mar 2025
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Current Assets			
Debtors	6,860	8,889	4,622
Cash at bank and in hand / (overdrawn)	2,216	4,531	7,693
Total current assets	9,076	13,420	12,315
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(9,388)	(8,420)	(7,316)
Total current liabilities	(9,388)	(8,420)	(7,316)
Net current assets / (Liabilities)	(312)	5,000	5,000
Long Term Creditors - Receipts in Advance	(5,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)
Total long term liabilities	(5,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)
Net Assets / (Liabilities)	(5,312)	0	(0)
Reserves			
Income and Expenditure Account	(5,312)	0	(0)
Reserves	(5,312)	0	(0)

Appendix 1 - 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 timeframe 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

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

1. Strategic approach, leadership and governance
2. Engaging and supporting the workforce
3. Engaging partners
4. Childrens voice and influence
5. Practice and performance
6. Fostering innovation
7. Better use of resources

Impact for children through	Action	Due by
Strategic approach		
To ensure focus on improvement and transformation leading to better outcomes	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 who are better informed and more able to champion the needs of C&YP	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 CLA 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
Put into place 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 Corporate Parenting Board	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 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 profile of H&S	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 partner 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 MASH 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 tests impact of workshops on practice.	31 May 2023
Improve management oversight and touch-points 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 PLO 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 - 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 CP, 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 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 RAA 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	To locate 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	Identify 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	Explore introducing second Mockingbird constellation	30 October 2023
To reduce high number of referrals for unborn children, need to be able to demonstrate relationship with early permanency .	To develop practice standard; consult on existing pre-birth tool and build into 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 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 t&F group (revise policies and procedures around CS)	31 December 2023
To strengthen the oversight of children who become missing from home	Clarify what is our policy and procedure - guidance for staff. Try to prevent silos - work across company as partnership	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 so as to deliver support needed	Deliver an SCF's approved Business 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	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 PLO 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 2
Suggested new contractual key performance indicators for Slough Children First

N o.	Indicator	Measure	Comments	Link to DfE commissioner priorities	New/ Existing KPIs
1	Effectiveness of corporate parenting panel	Satisfactory progress made against LGA review recommendations and Ofsted feedback	SCF is key to ensuring CPP is more effective, including via work programming, sharing of best practice and officer reports.	Political ownership	New
2	Effectiveness of Council's scrutiny function	Contribute to at least one scrutiny topic per year leading to evidence-based recommendations or improvements	SCF contributing to scrutiny programme, leading to purposeful scrutiny recommendations to drive improvements in services for children	Political ownership	New
3	Effective governance	Compliance with contractual requirements, including timely submission of annual report, business plan, performance reports and contributing to contract monitoring processes.	Compliance with contractual requirements leading to good collaboration and compromise, prioritising outcomes	Governance and accountability	New
4	Effective statutory partnerships	Implementation of recommendations from LGA peer review for youth justice service. Review of outcomes in annual safeguarding report. Attendance at key partnership boards.	Active engagement of partners in statutory partnerships managed by SCF, leading to evidence based improvements in outcomes. Effective contribution by SCF in partnership boards.	Effectiveness of partnership working	New

		Feedback from partners.			
5	Effective commissioning strategies	Published commissioning strategies with detailed action plans and systems for monitoring progress.	Focus is on single commissioning, but this may move to joint commissioning strategies in the future.	Effectiveness of business and improvement arrangements	New
6	Effective inter-agency working	Evidence of embedding local priorities across wider partnership. Deliver clear improvements in working with VCS and faith leaders/groups. Strengthen MASH.	Evidence may include co-location, joint training, work shadowing, participation in strategy meetings, core groups and CP conferences. Feedback from external inspections and reviews will provide further assurance.	Effectiveness of partnership working	New
7	Business improvement	Evidence of: supporting children to stay at home, family led decision-making, strengthening of oversight of children missing from home and vulnerable to exploitation.	This is covered in business and improvement plan, but the detail will be in action planning beneath this. This should focus on better outcomes withing financial budget. Progress should be covered in annual report.	Effectiveness of business and improvement arrangements	New
8	Effective risk management system	Embed audit programme to drive improvements in quality of service. Improved management oversight. Evidence of LADO providing scrutiny and oversight where	Evidence of data informing risk registers and team, directorate and corporate risk register systems leading to effective mitigation of risk - measured by reporting to SCF A&CG Committee.	Effectiveness of business and improvement arrangements	New

		professional issues raised.			
9	Culture leading to outcomes focused improvements	Positive feedback from staff surveys. Feedback from children, young people and families. Complaints data reporting system embedding listening and learning culture.	Evidence to be presented in annual report and stand alone reports updating on progress against children and young people's participation strategy.	Cultural shift, change management and communications	New
10	Improved participation of children and young people at strategic level	Evidence that the aspirations and priorities in the children and young people's participation strategy are delivering improved outcomes and positive feedback from children and young people. Feedback from surveys and capturing ad hoc feedback. Evidence of involvement from harder to reach groups. Effective consultation on new and amended strategies.	Breadth of opportunity for children and young people to drive and influence practice and strategy.	Participation, voice and influence	New
11	Financial sustainability - annually - SCF will live within its means	Production of regular financial forecasting reports to SCF board and in contract monitoring meetings.	SCF producing evidence based contract sum request and containing resources within this.	Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources	New

		Evidence of actions being taken to mitigate pressures where identified. Appropriate use of in-year change mechanism where required.			
1 2	Evidence of value for money.	Effectively manage all external placements. Reduce overall spend on legal costs Reduce cost of independent assessments in PLO cases. Robust arrangements for determining unit costings, value for money comparisons across comparators	Priorities are set out in business and improvement plan. This will require effective action planning and assurance data to the board and in contract monitoring meetings. This also links to a culture / doctrine across the organisation in relation to best value.	Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources	New
1 3	Financial sustainability - medium term	To deliver a MTFS which aligns with Council's MTFS and to ensure plans to repay loan at end of contract.	Delivery of longer term priorities that deliver improvements within medium term funding envelope	Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources	New
1 4	Quality of practice	QA reports demonstrating robust RAG rating linked to need to drive improvements and showing improvement over time. % of re-referrals at 22% or below. CLA placed over 20 miles away at 20% or below.	Added in quality assurance measures.	Quality of Practice	Amended

15	Participation in CLA reviews	92.0% or above participating. QA identifying that participation is effective and leading to individualised plans.	Add in quality standard in addition to number participating.	Participation Voice and Influence	Existing
16	CLA placed over 20 miles away	20%	To keep under review target and whether this should benchmark to England or South East.	Quality of Practice	Existing
17	Care experienced young people in employment, education or training	52% in EET. 85% with pathway plan (18+). QA process demonstrating quality of plan and evidence of effective participation.	Added in quality standard.	Participation Voice and Influence	Amended
18	Workforce supervision	Evidence of appraisals being undertaken and learning and development captured. Staff survey feedback. Turnover data and exit interview data.		Workforce planning and staff engagement	Amended
19	Workforce diversity	Workforce strategy with priorities and targets for workforce diversity. Evidence of effective staff networks representing staff with protected characteristics. Mentoring and support	Aligned with Council's equality objectives.	Workforce planning and staff engagement	Amended

		programme to increase diversity at management and leadership levels.			
20	Children with disabilities	Ensure disability assessments are undertaken and care needs met to enable children with disabilities to engage in social activities on an equal footing to their peers	Improvement can be measured via external assessment by Ofsted and feedback from DfE from monitoring visits.	Quality of practice	New

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date	18 December 2023
Subject:	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update
Lead Member:	Cllr Bedi – Lead Member for Education and Children’s Services
Chief Officer:	Sue Butcher – Executive Director for People – Children
Contact Officer:	Neil Hoskinson – Director of Education
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Monitoring Report for Written Statement of Action [WSoA] DFE Visit November 2023 Appendix 2 – 15 th September Safety Valve Intervention Programme / High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan Summary Update Report

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the key actions taken to address the priorities identified by Ofsted and the CQC in their inspection report from 2021. There has been considerable progress made since the DFE Monitoring visit in July 2023 and the first full monitoring report for the Safety Valve Agreement / High Needs Deficit Recovery Plan was completed in September. This report is to share the progress with Cabinet to ensure that Cabinet members are active participants in our improvement journey.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to note the progress and agree to continue receiving quarterly updates for the remainder of this municipal year.

Reason:

This report provides assurance to Cabinet of the progress made against the improvement plan. Whilst these updates can in the future be provided outside of formal Cabinet meetings, it is recommended that formal updates are provided on a quarterly basis for the remainder of this municipal year to demonstrate that the system in place for making improvements is working in practice.

Commissioner Review

The SEND Commissioner commented that "whilst I'd also acknowledge the progress made since July 2023, including improved data gathering information sharing and a more robust action plan is now being undertaken, the Council and it's partners need to begin to demonstrate the impact these changes are having with families. The Children's Services management team have engaged well with partners and some parents but they need to press ahead with joint commissioning arrangements and promoting the 'local offer' in the New Year."

DLUHC Commissioners have reviewed this report have no comments to add to those already supplied by the DfE Commissioner.

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 these. This report provides an update on progress.

2.9 Options considered

There is no legal requirement to provide updates on the progress to Cabinet. As an alternative the Lead Member for Children's Services could assure himself of satisfactory improvements in update meetings with officers. However, there was previously a delay in reporting the inspection outcome to Cabinet, leading to Cabinet not being able to formally approve the WSOA. For this reason Cabinet asked for regular updates to be formally reported to assure itself of progress. It is recommended that this continues for the rest of this municipal year, after which improvements are reported outside of formal cabinet meetings to avoid Cabinet having a high number of reports going to each meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 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 these.

The priority areas are:

1. Arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across Education, Health and Care services.
2. The voice of children and young people with SEND and their families to help understand their lived experiences and to gather helpful and accurate information.

3. Use of meaningful performance information to inform the area's strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.
4. Opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.
5. The timeliness with which Education Health and Care (EHC) plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and systematic processes for the quality assurance of plans.
6. Social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children's social care, and services in the area, including age-appropriate social opportunities, the short breaks offer and respite services.
7. Access to speech and language (SALT), occupational therapy (OT) services and waiting times as well as the development of a Dysphagia Service.

The introduction to the WSoA document also set out the principles and approach that had been agreed with all partners:

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 As part of the oversight of the SEND improvement journey, the DFE hold quarterly monitoring visits. The next visit is due to take place on 13th November 2023. This report updates Cabinet on the progress made since the previous visit in July and if appropriate will provide a verbal update on any feedback received on the November visit if this is received after publication of this report.
- 3.4 On August 4th this year, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Statutory Direction to the Council in relation to its SEND services. This was due to a lack of progress made to address the seven areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report from October 2021. The evidence regarding lack of progress was obvious at the DFE Monitoring Visit that took place at the end of February this year and from reports from the Department for Education (DFE) appointed Commissioner and SEND Adviser. As a result, the remit of the Children's Services Commissioner, Paul Moffatt, has been extended to include the Council SEND functions.
- 3.5 At the July Monitoring Visit, the Council was able to demonstrate that important progress had been made. The DFE stated that they are aware that there has been "considerable change in senior leadership at SBC" in recent months and that the new team are "determined and motivated to bring positive change". A new SEND Improvement Action Plan had been agreed aligning all 94 actions in the Written Statement of Action [WSoA] to five workstreams. A new team of case officers and managers was in place and there were examples of "green Shoots" of progress in the number of Education Health and Care [EHC] plans completed in June and July 2023.

The Monitoring Report for the DFE Visit on 13th November 2023 is in appendix 1 of this report.

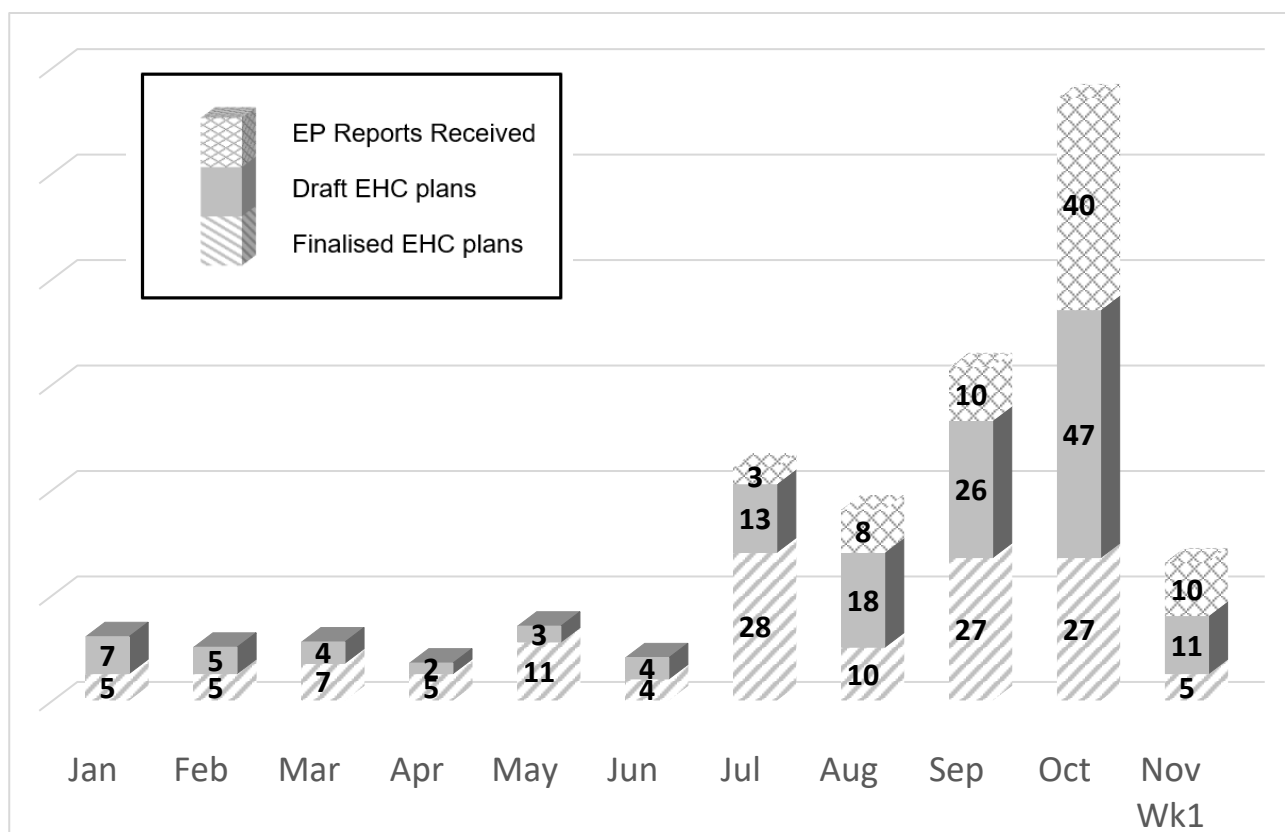
Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Safety Valve Agreement [SVA]

- 3.6 In 2023 the Council entered into a Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement with the Department for Education [DFE]. This was a result of the authority predicting a deficit at the end of the 2022/2023 financial year of £27.6 million. The deficit was mainly caused by overspending in the High Needs Block for children and young people with SEND.
- 3.7 The Council undertook to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of the 2025/26 financial year and in each subsequent year eliminating their cumulative deficit no later than 2026/2027. To help to achieve this balanced budget position, the DFE agreed to provide £27 million of additional funding in staged payments up to the end of the 2026/2027 financial year.
- 3.8 The DFE additional funding is conditional on the authority providing quarterly monitoring reports that evidence that sufficient progress is being made to achieving the in-year balance in its DSG budget by 2025/2026. The first full monitoring report was sent to the DFE on 15th September showing that the Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets set out in its Safety Valve Agreement. As a result, the DFE have agreed to provide the first tranche of funding (£10.8 million).
- 3.9 Department for Education (DFE) Monitoring Visit July 2023
- 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.
- 3.10 A SEND 0-25 Partnership Board oversees the transformation of SEND services in Slough. Their work is supported by a 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.
- 3.11 Shortly after the visit, the latest monthly reporting to the DFE included the fact that 28 EHC plans had been finalised in July. This is the most in one month since the inspection and included 5 that had been completed within statutory timescales which is again the best performance since 2021 (although this has been surpassed since). Although this is very encouraging and evidences the improvement in the service, it is not yet at the level of the service in 2020 when around 30 plans were completed each month.

3.12 Slough Quarterly Progress Review on the WSoA – November 2023

The next monitoring visit by the DFE takes place on 13th November 2023. Prior to the visit, a report is submitted setting out the general improvements that have been achieved as well as providing more detail against each of the seven areas of weakness. The report has a particular focus on improvements between July and November 2023. The full report is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

Since June 2023 there has been a significant shift in the number of EHC plans completed each month (as reflected in the table).



Levels of completed EHC plans will continue to increase in future months as evidenced by the fact that 47 draft plans were sent out in October. The percentage of plans completed inside the twenty-week statutory timescale has also increased with 7 successfully finalised in October. This will increase considerably once the backlog of cases has been cleared.

- 3.13 This has been achieved by maintaining a consistent SEND team, targeted training in key areas of practice and streamlining the SEND Statutory processes. The appointment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP], a practicing SEND 0-25 Ofsted Inspector, has also energised the statutory process. The PEP chairs the SEND 0-25 weekly Panel which is now functioning well. Another significant factor has been securing additional interim educational psychologist capacity. Currently the PEP is directing and allocating 40 EP Assessments a month which the SEND 0-25 Team are turning around month on month into timely EHC plan drafts and Final EHC plans. In June there were 130 unallocated EP assessments, this has now reduced to 80. In addition, the advice is being professionally quality assured to British Psychological Society Standards.

- 3.14 Existing staff members have also taken on the new Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategic Lead and the Lead for Inclusion roles. These are both key focus areas for this term moving into next year. The PfA lead has designed proformas and systems for collecting lived experience evidence from young people and their families, as well as drafting a new PfA approach. The Lead for Inclusion is focusing on the Graduated Approach and identifying best practice locally and more widely to share at a school inclusion conference in January 2024.
- 3.15 Following a drop in the number of EHC plans finalised in August 2023 (see table above) it was agreed not to renew the interim contract of the Head of SEND 0-25 ending at end of the same month. The existing SEND 0-25 Commissioner has taken on the Head of SEND 0-25 role and a new Operational Lead for SEND 0-25 has been recruited to support the statutory team.
- 3.16 Overall, there has clearly been more progress against the individual actions in the WSoA since the last monitoring visit. A significant change since July has been the development of a new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan based on 5 clearly defined workstreams. New reporting processes ensure a much tighter focus on the individual actions and each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report. As a result, there is a closer alignment to the WSoA impact measures in our reporting to ensure that all actions are completed by May 2024. Since the WSoA was launched with 94 separate actions, 20 have been completed of which 9 were health actions linked to integrated therapies. At the September meeting, evidence was provided that a further 17 actions had been completed across four different workstreams improving the completion rate from 21.3% to 39.4%, an increase of 18.1%. A further 36 actions are on track to be completed by the end of December which would bring the percentage up to 77.7%, an increase of 38.1%.
- 3.17 A Working Together Coproduction and Partnership Charter has been agreed following in-person / online sessions that involved over 190 people including young people, parents, carers and professionals. The strategy will inform and underpin transformation work as well as the business-as-usual service delivery.
- 3.18 Funding and procurement for a redesign for the Local Offer redesign was agreed and the final version of the new website has been designed following a consultation with young people with SEND and their families as well as with partners. As well as improving the look of the website; functionality, accessibility and useability have been improved and work is ongoing to identify and fill gaps in the services on the website.
- 3.19 A current critical focus is on gathering lived experiences of children, young people and their families. The process and templates for this work are being developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders.
- 3.20 The partnerships with health continue to develop and senior health colleagues are important members of the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. The ICB Chief Nurse currently chairs the Local Safeguarding Partnership Board which brings further opportunities for closer working.

3.21 **Safety Value Intervention Programme/High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan**

The Dedicated Schools Grant ‘Safety Valve’ Agreement [SVA] between the DFE and the Council covers the financial years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. Appendix 2 contains the first full monitoring report submitted to the DFE in September setting out the progress made on our recovery plan. The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2025-26 and in each subsequent year. The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit as follows, not including any contribution made by the department through this agreement:

Year	Forecast DSG Deficit Profile at year end (£m)
2022-23	£27.6m
2023-24	£28.1m
2024-25	£28.1m
2025-26	£27.7m
2026-27	£27.0m

3.22 The authority agrees to implement the DSG management plan that it has set out. This includes action to:

- Work with providers to ensure best value and, where necessary, review and renegotiate the fees, rates, and tariffs;
- Ensure commissioning of SEND placements, therapies and individual tuition reflects population trends and is in line with the current High Needs Block Guidance;
- Review local Post-16 provision in collaboration with health and adult services to ensure there is a wider range of quality provision available;
- Review and remodel the current system for awarding Top Up Funding;
- Review agreements for Alternative Provision (AP) with local providers and ensure sufficient places are available;

3.23 As part of the agreement, the DFE has agreed to pay the Council an additional £10.80 million of DSG before the end of the financial year 2022-23. In subsequent financial years, further instalments will be provided (see table below) subject to the Council making satisfactory progress against the actions above.

Year	The DFE agrees to pay to the Council an additional £m of DSG by year end
2022-23	£10.80m
2023-24	£3.24m
2024-25	£3.24m
2025-26	£3.24m
2026-27	£6.48m

- 3.24 The provisional outturn position for 2022-23 is an overspend on all DSG blocks of £0.097m with an overspend on the High Needs DSG Block of £0.407m. This contrasts with a forecast overspend on all DSG Blocks at quarter 3 of 2022-23 of £1.638m. 2023-24 Period 5 Budget Management report for High Needs DSG has total forecast spend of £22.3m against a budget of £25.1m. As a result of the progress evidenced in the report, the first payment of £10.80 million has been agreed.
- 3.25 The SEND Team is working on a backlog of EHCP's which is estimated to create additional forecast spending of £2.6m in High Needs funding not included in the figures above. This would give a more accurate overall projected spend of £24.9m, and an estimated underspend of 0.2m in 2023-24. Overall, in 2023-24 the four DSG blocks are projected an underspend of £0.6m (£0.3m in schools block, £0.2m in high needs block and £0.1m in the early years block). More work is being undertaken to refine our modelling forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 report.
- 3.26 New monitoring arrangements for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement are in place with fortnightly meetings taking place including the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children Services [DCS]. Work is being undertaken to refine forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 SVA Monitoring Report.
- 3.27 In discussions with the DFE around the WSoA and the SVA, we discussed additional support that would help us to achieve our targets. These support activities fall into two broad categories, a request for additional capital funding and establishing a support programme linked to the key workstreams. Some local authorities entering into a Safety Valve Agreement were awarded additional capital, but Slough did not make a request. the Council are now looking to submit a retrospective request for additional capital funding to increase our special school places to meet the rising demand over the next four years. There is also the possibility of a future application for an all-through Special Free School when the application process reopens. Conversations have already taken place with the Council for Disabled Children, regarding the RISE programme and an initial proposal has been drafted around support for the Inclusion Conference in January 2024 as well as the Graduated Approach framework. There is likely to be further support that we can access.

3.28 Priorities this term

- Consistently improving performance
- Lived Experiences
- Joint Commissioning
- Inclusion
- SEND 0-25 Handbook / Communications Charter
- SEND pupil attendance and SEND needs of the Electively Home Educated cohort.
- Working Parties for SEND 0-25 Sufficiency, Capita and Preventing Exclusions

3. **Implications of the Recommendation**

3.1 Financial implications

Although there is a clear focus on the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Council's Safety Valve Agreement in this paper, there are no direct financial implications because it is purely for information purposes. All the financial information in this paper has been cross referenced with the Safety Value Intervention Programme/High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan completed by Neill Butler, Strategic Finance Manager, People (Children).

The SEND Improvement Plan aligns to the High Needs Block recovery and Safety Valve monitoring programme.

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

	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
1	Failure to produce EHC plans within statutory timescales means that children and young people do not receive the right support early enough.	Dissatisfied families and children and young people's SEND needs not met. As a result children and young people do not achieve the best outcomes. Also possibility of tribunals and LGSCO complaints.	Additional locum EPs in place and revised SEND statutory processes are maintaining a high level of EHC plans. New panel processes already impacting on the quality of decision making and timeliness.
2	Lack of consistent approach to SEND in mainstream schools around the graduated approach.	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with more requests for EHC plans..	Ongoing work to coproduce a new graduated approach for Slough to be launched at an Inclusion Conference. Inclusion a focus of Autumn Term Visits.
3	Failure to secure enough non-maintained places for pupils requiring resource provision or a special school.	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with more independent school places needed.	SEND Sufficiency Working Party established and SEND needs added to the Place Planning Board TOR.
4	Failure to complete WSoA actions by the end of May 2024.	Reputational damage to the SEND Service and wider Council. Statutory Notice remains in place.	Improvement Action Plan and project management in place to ensure timescales are kept.
5	Failure to secure the trust and confidence of families in delivering support for their child with SEND	Lack of engagement and lost opportunities for coproduction and joint working.	Working Together Charter in place, new Local Offer website and SEND handbook to be launched at the Special Voices Information Day.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 There are no known environmental implications arising from this report.

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 Children and young people with a disability are protected by the Equality Act 2014. “The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act. In particular, it works in only one direction – that is to say, it protects disabled people but not people who are not disabled. This means that schools are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so, by making reasonable adjustments to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities.”

In the last academic year, 2022/23, over 389,000 pupils in England had an EHC plan and a further 1.1 million were receiving SEND support without a plan. Therefore over 17% of all pupils are classed as having SEND. The most common type of need for those with an EHC plan is autistic spectrum disorder but a rapidly increasing number have social, emotional, mental health issues. Earlier identification and meeting their additional needs will have a positive impact on their educational outcomes and wider life chances.

3.6 *Corporate Parenting Implications*

3.6.1 The majority of Children Looked After [CLA] by local authorities have SEND and will often have suffered instability in their education. CLA children and young people are nine times more likely to have an EHC plan than their peers but also likely to not have had their needs accurately assessed as early due to these gaps in schooling. Any improvements in overall SEND services will have an obvious positive impact on the CLA cohort in terms of meeting their needs and mitigating the impact of previous educational issues.

Similarly, young people with SEND must be a priority in Preparation for Adulthood work to prepare them for moving away from school and into positive adult pathways. This includes post 16 education and training places, support for employability, independence training and supported internships.

4. **Background Papers**

Appendix 1 – Monitoring Report for Written Statement of Action [WSoA] DFE Visit November 2023

Appendix 2 – 15th September Safety Valve Intervention Programme / High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan Summary Update Report

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SLOUGH QUARTERLY PROGRESS REVIEW ON WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

13th November 2023

Signed by:

SUE BUTCHER

**Executive Director People Children's / CXSCF Slough Childrens
First**



Signed by:

TRACEY FARADAY-DRAKE

Executive Managing Director



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Introduction

This is the Slough SEND 0-25 Local Area Partnership's progress update report against the Written Statement of Action. The report provides evidence of progress made since the WSoA started, with a particular focus on improvements between June 2023 and November 2023.

The partnerships between the Borough and Health continue to develop and this period has provided opportunities for senior health colleagues to meet with the commissioners to feed into the current review of Slough Childrens First. The ICB Chief Nurse currently chairs the Local Safeguarding Partnership Board which brings further opportunities for closer working. Outside of the SEND arena there are some innovative joint initiatives between the ICB and the Borough Council, such as the joint visits by a housing officer and asthma nurse which captures the clinical needs of children with asthma alongside the housing needs of the family, addressing social, environmental and health needs to improve outcomes for children and avoid hospital admissions.

The Slough Leaders Learning Set which began in 2022 also continues to meet and is a space for senior leaders from across the community to come together with a focus on tackling the inequalities and helping to make Slough a good and safe place to live, work and visit.

This written report is accompanied by appendices, including an action tracker. Please note that appendices have been collated in the attached Zip File for ease of access.

Headlines

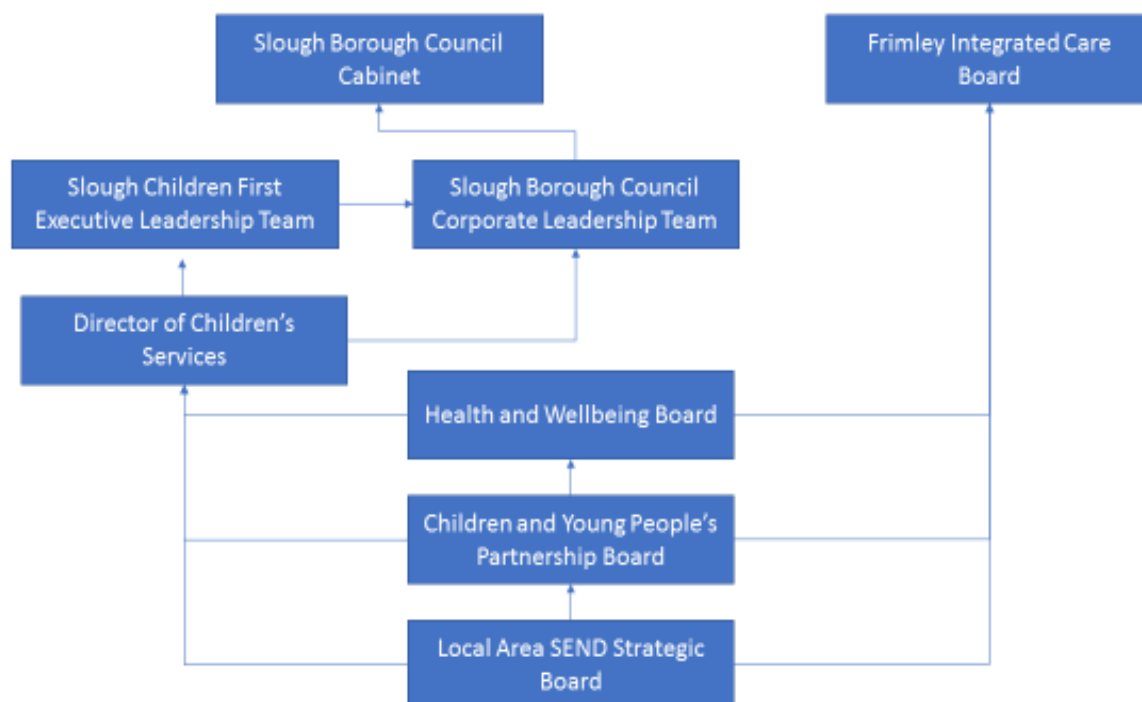
The key points that you will read in this update report are:

- A continued, shared local area-wide ambition to improve the lived experiences of children and families in Slough.
- Evidence of listening to children, families, and professionals, and of co-producing plans and services.
- Evidence that the local area partnership itself is learning and adapting, embedding lived experience and continuous improvement.
- Examples of changes to the lived experience of children and their families in Slough.
- Progress made against the WSoA actions since the last reporting period.
- Evidence of impact for children and their families in Slough, as delivered through actions responding to the seven Priorities in the WSoA.
- Risks, checks, and balances on the progress to achieve timelines already agreed.
- A trajectory for continuous improvement.

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WSoA Priorities and Responsibilities

The Slough SEND 0-25 Local Area Strategic Board is accountable for the delivery of progress against the Written Statement of Action and has the following reporting lines into decision-making forums at Slough Borough Council, Slough Children First and Frimley ICS.



The partnership has assigned lead responsibility for enabling delivery of the actions to the following colleagues:

Priority Area	Priority Area Title	Responsible Owners
1	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].	<p>Neil Hoskinson [Assistant Director Education]</p> <p>Len Brazier [Head of SEND 0-25]</p>
2	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.	<p>Adele Simpson [Preparation for Adulthood Strategic Lead]</p> <p>Gary Nixon [Principal Educational Psychologist]</p>

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3	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area's strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.	<p>Dave Hounsell [Group Manager – Data, Insight, Strategy, Transformation]</p>
4	There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.	<p>Brynmor Smart [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]</p> <p>Gary Nixon [Principal Educational Psychologist]</p>
5	The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.	<p>Brynmor Smart [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]</p> <p>Len Brazier [Head of SEND 0-25 & Lead Commissioner]</p>
6	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children's social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.	<p>Ben Short [Assistant Director Social Care, Slough Children First]</p>
7	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.	<p>Alison Woodiwiss [Head of Transformation, CYP Mental Health and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Frimley Integrated Care System]</p>

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Where are we now?

Snapshot - SEND 0-25 Service activity October 2023 -

The Right Support at the Right Time with the Right Focus for the SEND 0-25 Team.

Please see the simple table below which is an operational snapshot of Educational Health and Care [EHC] plan system delivery at the end of this reporting period. It is placed here as evidence of the impact of increasing numbers of EHC plans that have been compiled, drafted, and issued by SEND 0-25 Team in this period. This improvement was kick started by the poor output in August 2023 when Senior Staff were changed, a new PEP arrived, and the SEND Team 0-25 have been managed 'differently'. It also shows the impact of having timely Educational Psychology reports through targeted allocations. This drives a flow of evidence that the SEND 0-25 Team can deliver a service on time and respond to students, families, and schools.

Slough SEND 0-25 Team Weekly Dashboard update	Totals
EP reports received	40
Draft sent out	47
Finalised meeting 20 week	7
Finalised over 20 weeks	12
Totals as of 27 th October 2023	19
Remaining finals due out before month end	8
Finalised total: Oct 2023	27

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General update on progress or areas of significant impact on the local area e.g., staffing

The February Monitoring Visit evidenced the lack of progress that had been made to address the areas of significant weakness identified by the inspectors in the Local Area Inspection. As a result, Minister Coutinho decided to issue a Statutory Notice to Slough Borough Council [SBC] SEND 0-25 Services.

Key progress was made by the time of the next Monitoring Visit in July 2024 and SBC was able to demonstrate “green shoots” of progress. Improvements had already been made to the SEND 0-25 team, the statutory processes and in identifying additional locum Educational Psychologist [EP] support. The Minister’s office accepted that a new leadership team was now in place and that they were determined to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

New Improvement Action Plan

This report is aligned to the Seven [7] Areas of significant weakness, however, a significant change since the last DFE Monitoring Visit has been the development of a new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan based on five [5] clearly defined workstreams. The remaining WSoA actions have been mapped into these workstreams and have a nominated officer to lead on each action and a workstream lead to coordinate the different pieces of work. New reporting processes ensure a much tighter focus on the individual actions. A new system identifies completed actions but where further evidence of impact is being collected before being put forward for DFE sign off. Each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report.

As a result, there is a closer alignment to the WSoA impact measures in our reporting to ensure that all actions are completed by May 2024. Since the WSoA was launched with 94 separate actions, 20 have been completed of which 9 were health actions linked to integrated therapies. At the September meeting, evidence was provided that a further 17 actions had been completed across four different workstreams improving the completion rate from 21.3% to 39.4%, an increase of 18.1%. A further 36 actions are on track to be completed by the end of December which would bring the percentage up to 77.7%, an increase of 38.1%.

Staffing Changes

Since June 2023 the performance data has improved significantly and so there is a clearer impact evident from the transformation that has taken place. The key factors here are maintaining a stable team of SEND 0-25 officers, the impact of the managers and focused training based on a skills audit of individual staff.

However, following a decline in the number of EHC plans finalised in August 2023 and the 6-month contract of the Head of SEND 0-25 ending at end of the same month, it was decided not to renew. To sustain pace, drive and impact the

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existing SEND 0-25 Commissioner and SEND 0-25 Transition Lead roles have now been combined into the Head of SEND 0-25 role.

To further strengthen the leadership and management of the SEND 0-25 Team, SBC has appointed a new Operational Lead for SEND 0-25, reporting directly to the Head of SEND 0-25, who manages directly the two existing SEND 0-25 Team Managers. This strong and combined working together of collected SEND expertise has shown immediate impact in the processing and creating of EHC plans and consequential, tangible output of EHC plans within 20 weeks.

The appointment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP], a practicing SEND 0-25 Ofsted Inspector, has also energised the statutory process. Currently the PEP is directing and allocating 40 EP Assessments a month which the SEND 0-25 Team are turning around month on month into timely EHC plan drafts and Final EHC plans [see October data]. The PEP also Chairs the SEND 0-25 weekly Panel. The SEND 0-25 panel is now functioning well with dedicated SEND 0-25 Officer time for detailed preparation of evidence.

Existing staff members have also taken on the new Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategic Lead and the Lead for Inclusion roles. These are both key focus areas for this term moving into next year. The PfA lead has designed proformas and systems for collecting lived experience evidence from young people and their families, as well as drafting a new PfA approach. The Lead for Inclusion is focusing on the Graduated Approach and identifying best practice locally and more widely to share at a school inclusion conference in January 2024.

Safety Valve Agreement [SV] First Monitoring Report

In September, SBC sent the first monitoring report for its Safety Valve Agreement to the DFE. This showed that the Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets. The provisional outturn position for 22-23 is a DSG overspend of £0.097m [including an overspend on the HNB of £0.407m]. This contrasts with a forecast overspend of £1.638m.

The current 2023-24 total forecast spend of £22.3m is against a budget of £25.1m. However, there is a backlog of 290 EHCNAs that have not been factored into this forecast. The SEND 0-25 team have estimated that, using current benchmarks, this will generate additional funding of £2.6m. Therefore, even including this additional forecast spending, this would currently give an overall projected spend of £24.9m and an estimated underspend of 0.2m in 2023-24.

New monitoring arrangements for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement are in place with fortnightly meetings taking place including the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children Services [DCS]. Work is being undertaken to refine forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 SVA Monitoring Report.

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There is pressure from demand for EHC plans as well as existing settings requesting larger than usual cost of living inflationary increases. Currently all uplifts agreed have been in line with the SBC maximum uplift policy. Mitigations are inbuilt and already seeing an impact. There is potential for capital projects to support commissioning of places as population fluctuates.

Request For Additional Support

In discussions with the DFE around the WSoA and the Safety Valve Agreement, we discussed additional support that would help us to achieve our targets. At the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board in September, a range of potential support activities were identified. These support activities fall into two broad categories, a request for additional capital funding and establishing a support programme linked to the key workstreams.

There is approximately £5M of SEND 0-25 capital funding which has provisionally been allocated to support the programme to increase the capacity of Specialist Resource Provision [SRP] / Designated Units [DU] and for converting three buildings that were previously children's centres into SEND 0-25 Bases This is necessary to meet the demand for places in the September 2024 phase transfer process and increasing levels of SEND in early years. The allocation will still need to be formally approved by the Council processes once the sufficiency approach has been agreed by December 2023.

Some local authorities entering into a Safety Valve Agreement were awarded additional capital, but Slough did not make a request. SBC are now looking to submit a retrospective request for additional capital funding to increase our special school places to meet the rising demand over the next four years. There is also the possibility of a future application for an all-through Special Free School when the application process reopens. Since March 15th, 2023, no pupils have been placed in Out-Of-Area Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools [INMSS]. Without additional places, particularly for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health [SEMH] needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorder [ASD], there is a high risk that there need to be pupils placed in INMSS provision.

Conversations have already taken place with Sam Gomarsall, who is the Programme Manager for the Council for Disabled Children, around the RISE programme and an initial proposal has been drafted around support for the Inclusion Conference in January 2024 as well as the Graduated Approach framework. However, there is likely to be further support that we can access.

Priorities this term

- Consistently improving performance
- Lived Experiences
- Joint Commissioning

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- Inclusion
- SEND 0-25 Handbook / Communications Charter
- SEND pupils attendance and SEND needs of the Electively Home Educated [EHE] cohort.
- Working Parties for SEND 0-25 Sufficiency, Capita and Preventing Exclusions

Coproduction and Communication with Our Families

A Working Together Coproduction / Partnership Charter was developed following in-person / online sessions that involved over 190 people including young people, parents, carers and professionals. The draft charter was circulated to the SEND 0-25 Board, internally to SBC staff, families, schools and partners for feedback. The strategy has been agreed and will inform and underpin the transformation work as well as the business-as-usual service delivery from the SEND 0-25 team.

Funding and procurement for a redesign for the Local Offer redesign was agreed and the final version of the new website was designed following a consultation with young people with SEND and their families as well as with partners. As well as improving the look of the website, functionality, accessibility and useability have been improved by the new framework. Work is ongoing to identify and fill gaps in the services on the website as business as usual.

The current critical focus is on gathering Lived Experiences of children, young people and their families. The process and templates for this work are being developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders.

WSoA Actions/timescale check		
Are there any actions behind schedule?	Not against re-profiled dates in the new WSoA improvement action plan.	
Action	Reason	Mitigation/remedial action
Re baselined all the timescales in the WSoA.	Lack of progress made up to February 2023 as evidenced in the DFE Monitoring Visit and the Subsequent Statutory Notice.	New Improvement Action Plan agreed by SEND 0-25 Partnership Board with all actions complete by the end of May 2024. However, actions will not be signed off until there is evidence of impact. All remaining actions are currently on track to be complete either by the end of December 2023 or May 2024 as agreed in the improvement plan.

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Support received in this reporting period

Support Activity	We have received support from the DFE including Eleanor Deathridge, Daniel Hendrie and Liz Flaherty, as well as the Safety Valve Team. Discussions are ongoing with the RISE team about future support particularly with inclusion.
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Progress on Priorities 1-7

Priority 1	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].
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Progress on key actions

Joint Oversight and Accountability

The one action due for completion in September 2023 in this workstream area [1.1.2] has been signed off by the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. Arrangements for joint oversight and accountability are now in place through the Slough SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. The Board has met regularly now over a number of months and has agreed Terms of Reference [ToR]. There is a supporting data dashboard so that progress is measurable against agreed Key Performance Indicators [KPIs]. Health, social care, early years, schools and Special Voices are all members whilst minutes show that partners understand their roles and responsibilities and demonstrate evidence of oversight and accountability.

A new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan, based on five clear workstreams, has been signed off by the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. The remaining WSoA actions have been mapped into these workstreams and have a nominated officer to lead on each action and a workstream lead to coordinate the different pieces of work. New reporting processes ensure a much tighter focus on the individual actions. Each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report.

Workforce Development

The one action due for completion in September 2023 [1.2.2] is complete. Building on the Workforce Development Strategy, the capacity of the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team has been reviewed and new staff are in post including a new operational lead, team managers, case officers, a PFA officer, a new inclusion lead and a new Principal EP. The impact is clear with a higher level of EHC plans completed within statutory timescales and overall. The backlog of cases that has built up over time

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is now beginning to reduce. Initial quality assurance of EHC plans also indicates an improvement in their quality.

Future mapping shows the number of EHC plans will continue to increase and a benchmarking exercise is being carried out to ensure that the team is strong enough to support a larger cohort. Officers are in place to support transformation work in inclusion, Preparing for Adulthood [PfA] and a new PEP.

Place Planning and Sufficiency

Action 1.5.2 has also been completed with the updated ToR document for the Slough Place Planning Board now including a focus on SEND 0-25 sufficiency. This is supported by a SEND 0-25 Sufficiency Working Party including school leaders and other partners. This will support the updated Joint Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy that will be complete by the end of December 2023. This ensures that there is a more strategic approach to SEND 0-25 place planning and ensuring children and young people have access to the provision best suited to their needs. The Safety Valve Agreement monitoring evidence that pupils are being placed appropriately with the large majority in mainstream settings.

Promoting Inclusion/ Effective Practice

The following actions have taken place with a focus on consistent and effective inclusion practice in mainstream schools:

- Reviewed delivery model for Inclusion Teachers.
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants [ELSA] training being delivered.
- Service Day looking at SEND Quality First Education resources.
- Delivery of AET training [Autism Education Trust Training] has been rolled out across Slough Mainstream Schools. Since the 1/03/23 18 training sessions have been delivered to settings totaling 123 delegates. Additional training has been delivered internally to Children's Social Care and the SEND 0-25 Team.
- 2 SENDCo Network Meetings planned and delivered 1 meeting all age 1 meeting secondary SENDCO.
- SENDCo Conferences are planned for December and January.
December to review findings of SEND questionnaire. Young People to be invited to attend part of the session to contribute to the planning and parents will be consulted around the Slough SEND Best Practice.
- January to consult over the Graduated Approach Best Practice Strategy
- Inclusion Best Practice in Mainstream Settings meeting. Attendees SENDCo's, Head Teachers and Slough Inclusion Officers. Remit to develop a core offer of SEND best practice. First meeting held October.

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Evidence of impact

- The new Improvement Action Plan will allow the Board to monitor progress of the WSoA actions whilst the data dashboard allows alignment to agreed KPIs.
- New monitoring arrangements have been put in place for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement which will ensure that forecasts are more accurate and allow better decision making. This will inform the joint commissioning and sufficiency work.
- Changes to the SEND 0-25 team have improved the number and quality of EHC plans being produced each month. New staff appointments for inclusion, PfA and the new PEP are having a clear impact on transformation work.
- The new Place Planning Board arrangements will ensure that sufficient places are available for pupils with SEND requiring SRP and special school places.
- Inclusion Teachers School Age Have supported 25 different settings since September and capacity has kept pace with demand.
- ELSA training Feedback 2022 – 2023 is very positive.
- SENDCo Meetings have taken place and a Secondary SENDCO's working group formed to develop the Slough SEND core offer for primary to secondary transition.
- Inclusion Best Practice in Mainstream Settings meeting has taken place.
- Agreement has been secured for the development of the Graduated Approach strategy for Slough.
- Questionnaire / Self Evaluation for SEND 0-25 practices in settings in Slough. Was distributed in early November.
- SEND Setting Q & A Review process and document to be developed and trialed [29 November].
- Agreed to develop CPD for learning support assistants.

Key next steps

Inclusion in Schools

There were no actions due for completion in September 2023. As well as the actions listed above, a key focus of SEND 0-25 transformation work this term is to identify best inclusion practice particularly around the Graduated Approach. The

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Autumn Term Capacity and Risk visits to all schools include a questionnaire on inclusion. This information will be used to plan the January 2024 Inclusion Conference. The RISE program has also offered support for the conference. This work will inform the school-to-school support, training and other support.

Further steps:

- AET training to be delivered by “SEBDOS” to meet demand.
- Additional AET training to Governors and Schools Leadership team around legal duties.
- SEND Conference 1 & 2 Feedback development further consultation of Graduated response strategy/ SEND Good Practice.
- Liaise with Health and Social Care to include their resources into best practice documents.
- Design and deliver identified needs led Training to support Good Quality First Teaching across Slough (Summer Term). Including specific Learning Support Assistant [LSA] training.
- Publishing of strategy / documents on Local Offer.
- Finalizing Secondary Transition SEND Offer develop Year 11 transition and review Early Years.
- Embed Send Quality and Assistance reviews and feedback findings to SEND 0-25 Partnership Board and Head Teacher Forum.

Information Sharing Arrangements

The Inclusion Working Party will approve new induction paperwork by the end of term including guidance for information sharing. This will ensure that all schools have a consistent approach to improve information gathering and sharing which allows for more strategic analysis and action. The next stage will be to ensure that 9–12 month and 2-year review data is effectively shared where early identification suggests support is required to meet developmental milestones.

Preparation for Adulthood [PfA]

There are no actions that were due for completion in September 2023. However, a PfA lead is now in place and is working with other LA teams to review opportunities for post 16 transition including work experience, supported internships and employment opportunities with a view to improving outcomes and reducing NEET figures. A draft PFA strategy “Capturing the Journey” is being shared with partners for feedback alongside a PfA toolkit.

This includes a sufficiency review of opportunities and the creation of a multi-agency Transition Pathways Group to enable joint commissioning

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Priority 2	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.
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Progress on key actions

[2.1.1, 2.1.3, 3.2.3, 3.4.2]

- SEND Youth Focus Group took place in September 2023 - [Learning from the second SEND Youth Focus Group - Together as ONE](#)
- SEND 'How to support me' Form developed by young people through Together as One - [Introducing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \[SEND\] Support Form - Together as ONE](#)
- In order to ensure that we collectively listen to all stakeholders including parent carers and children and young people we have strengthened our communications with all. Our telephony service has been improved to ensure that nobody's query, question or feedback is missed or overlooked and is dealt with in a timely manner. This sits within the newly drafted communications charter.
- Three templates have been created for professionals, parent/carers, CYP to capture the Lived Experiences of their individual journeys. Whilst it is imperative to hear the Lived Experiences of our families, our colleagues in settings, in the SEND 0-25 team and other partners are also on this journey and only by hearing their perspectives can we truly ensure that we are improving services across the board which will improve outcomes for our families. These templates have been shared with all settings, SENDIASS, YOT, Special Voices, Virtual School, Adults, and the Young People's group Working Together As One, The Autism Group and will be sent out when EPs request advice at EHCNA stage. We are encouraging children and young people to share their stories in a variety of ways including videos, voice notes, drawings and text and will be offering £10 Amazon vouchers to participants.
- Paper written documenting the importance of capturing the Lived Experience of CYP as they transition into adulthood.
- Paper notes the importance of partnership working and co-production.
- Promotion of post-16 opportunities available i.e., "DFN Project Search" [presented to SEND 0-25 Team and at SENCo conference] and shared on Local Offer. Parent carers and young people have been given the opportunity to receive a similar presentation.

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- A Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategy has been drafted and shared for co-production with “Together As One” [a youth group], Special Voices and the Strategic Transition Group.
- A more robust system for monitoring and managing complaints is now in place with meetings held weekly with the Council Complaints Team. The SEND 0-25 Team is receiving ongoing training on how to reduce complaints by improving their communications with all stakeholders.

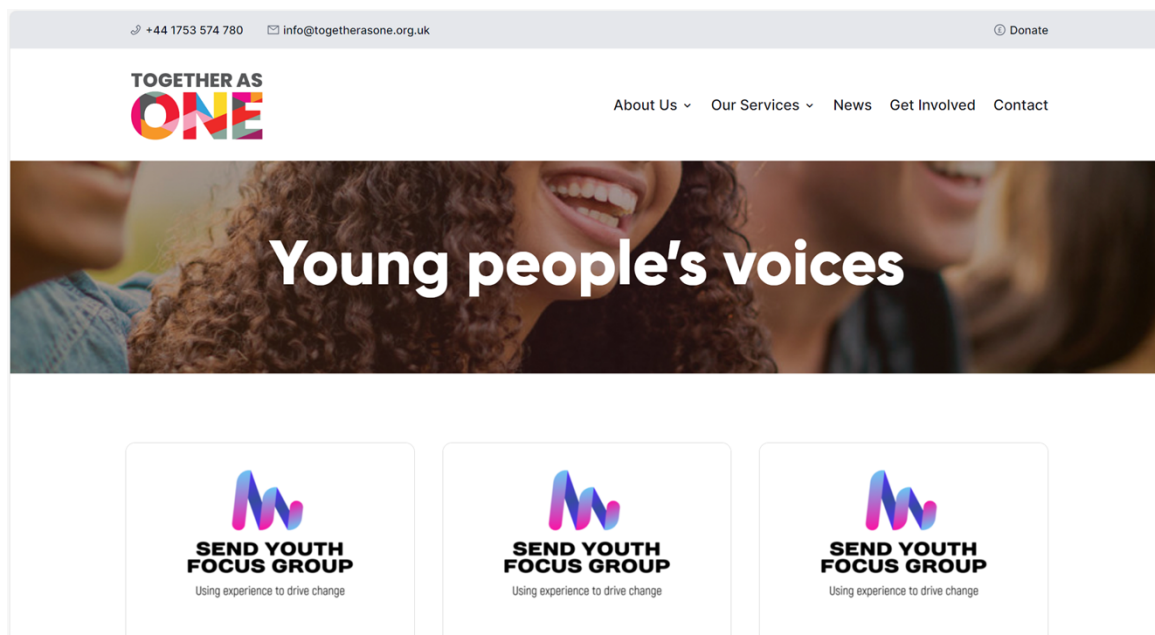
Evidence of impact

“Together as One” engagement continues:

[SEND – “Together as ONE”](#)

<https://togetherasone.org.uk/meet-jovi-our-new-send-engagement-and-participation-officer/>

<https://togetherasone.org.uk/category/young-peoples-voices/>



- CYP and families will feel listened to and included in decisions about the future and will be involved in next steps.
- Feedback from case studies showed pupil “V”, who attended a special school, was well supported to be an active member of the “Youth Parliament” [SYP]. He had previously had negative life experiences but had gone on to successfully participate in events and became healthier and happier.

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‘Trying out tips to stay happy and healthy during lockdown has led to V taking up regular bike riding and time out with family, indulging contacting his Nan, which he has said he enjoys.’

Another young person has found the support of “Together As One” invaluable,

‘I receive good support from my school and from my parents and more recently from Together as One. I have not always found joining in easy and would prefer my own company. As I have gotten older, I find conversations easier.’

When asked what the biggest moment in his life was, his response was:

‘Doing a speech about my experience of Autism for Together as One. This speech was in front of about 40 Adults and although I was nervous I didn’t let my nerves stop me from achieving this.’

- Early communication with stakeholders will reduce complaints and will ensure that all stakeholders have greater faith in the LA and the systems which they work within.
- Greater participation of CYP as well as parent carers is key to ensuring that they feel and know that they are valued.
- CYP feedback re PfA strategy shows they are particularly happy that PfA is to be considered from earlier than Y9.

Key next steps

- “What Is It Like To Be Me” Local Offer co-produced video will be developed with children by the end of January 2024, and made available on the new website.
- Regular Together as One engagement to continue.
- Work to be done to raise awareness of apprenticeships and to raise the offer and to broaden the offer.
- Recruitment of Supported Internship/Employment Officer to help raise awareness and to work with schools and FE settings, parent carers and YP to understand the post-16 pathways into employment.
- “Easy Read” versions of templates will be created in partnership with Adult Social Care.
- PfA Toolkit to be devised.
- Incorporate feedback from CYP and parent carers re PfA Strategy.
- Lived Experiences will be captured directly via voice note and videos in schools/settings evidencing ELSA and “Autism Education Trust” [AET] training

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Priority 3	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area's strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.
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Progress on key actions

At the June update it was reported that the following WSOA actions had not yet been completed, and that each action had a forecast completion date of either July or September 2023:

Due by July 2023

- **3.2.1** Ensure performance data is captured specifically to support equitable and transparent decision-making on funding.
- **3.1.3** Ensure Self-Evaluation Framework [SEF] includes specific data and reference to the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.
- **3.2.4** Develop and implement a system designed to capture and collate a wide representation of parent and carer views and make them available to area leaders.
- **3.3.1** Review and develop systems to allow data about pupils with an EHC plan who are absent from school and those on a school roll who are persistently absent to be gathered, interpreted, and insights shared.

Due by September 2023

- **3.5.1** Develop and implement a comprehensive and systemic data and performance dashboard that will drive improvement, set priorities, and inform strategy.
- **3.3.2** Based on the analysis of data enabling a better understanding of why too many pupils with an EHC plan are absent from school too often, draw up and implement an action plan to reduce absences.
- **3.4.1** Develop an action plan to increase participation in education for young people with SEND and no EHC plan.
- **3.4.2** Use data to track, monitor and assess participation in education to measure success, draw out insights about the effectiveness of the action plan and adapt the plan as appropriate if necessary.
- **3.5.2** Ensure an effective management information system [MIS] is in place to extract specific data on all children and young people, such as primary need, to inform current and future strategy.

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Evidence of impact		
Action	Impact evidence [as of Nov '23]	BRAG
3.1.3 Ensure SEF includes specific data and reference to the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.	Self-Evaluation Framework [SEF] developed and approved by SEND 0-25 Board in March 2023. On-going SEF development incorporated into inspection framework development project.	
3.2.1 Ensure performance data is captured specifically to support equitable and transparent decision- making on funding.	Monthly finance-activity reconciliations since July 2023. School Capacity Survey [SCAP] forecast developed and submitted to DfE in July 2023. SEND 0-25 Panel decision-making process informed by insight.	
3.2.4 Develop and implement a system designed to capture and collate a wide representation of parent and carer views and make them available to area leaders.	Service user feedback form developed for 0-25 SEND 0-25 Service. Special Voices parent-carer survey feedback presented regularly to the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board.	
3.3.1 Review and develop systems to allow data about pupils with an EHC plan who are absent from school and those on a school roll who are persistently absent to be gathered, interpreted and insights shared.	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.	
3.3.2 Based on the analysis of data enabling a better understanding of why too many pupils with an EHC plan are absent from school too often, draw up and implement an action plan to reduce absences.	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion. Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance. <i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i>	

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<p>3.4.1 Develop an action plan to increase participation in education for young people with SEND and no EHC plan.</p>	<p>“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.</p> <p>Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance.</p> <p><i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i></p>	
<p>3.4.2 Use data to track, monitor and assess participation in education to measure success, draw out insights about the effectiveness of the action plan and adapt the plan as appropriate if necessary.</p>	<p>“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.</p> <p>Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance.</p> <p><i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i></p>	
<p>3.5.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive and systemic data and performance dashboard that will drive improvement, set priorities, and inform strategy</p>	<p>Local Area SEND 0-25 Performance Report operational for 12 months. Presented to each SEND 0-25 Board.</p> <p>In addition, operational level performance reports were created and used by SEND 0-25 Service and the Berkshire Health Family Trust [BHFT] therapies services.</p>	
<p>3.5.2 Ensure an effective management information system [MIS] is in place to extract specific data on all children and young people, such as primary need, to inform current and future strategy.</p>	<p>Local Area SEND 0-25 Performance Report operational for 12 months. Presented to each SEND 0-25 Board.</p> <p>In addition, operational level performance reports were created and used by SEND 0-25 Service and BHFT therapies services.</p>	

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	<p>SEND 0-25 Service and BHFT share case load information at child-level, informed by case knowledge.</p> <p>Proactive set up of East Berkshire quarterly benchmarking club with Frimley ICS, RBWM, and Bracknell Forest, which draws out trends in need and outcomes.</p>	
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Key next steps

- The Local Area Partnership would be grateful for a dialogue with the DfE about marking this workstream complete. Due to the progress made against all WSOA actions, and impact evidenced, it is proposed that this workstream transitions into business-as-usual continuous improvement and is no longer reviewed as part of the Written Statement of Action.
- Business-as-usual continuous improvement will be led by the council’s new SEND Service Analyst [a new post with dedicated capacity] and Frimley ICS Performance Analysts.
- To provide assurance that there is a continued focus on good data and insight to improve the lives of children and families, the following is a summary of the business-as-usual continuous improvement plan in Slough for the next 6 months:
 - ✓ Improvements to, and submission of “SEN2” 2024 child-level return.
 - ✓ Improvements to, and preparation ready for Ofsted Annex A dataset return.
 - ✓ Improvements to, and preparation ready for SCAP 2024 return.
 - ✓ Continue to deliver new quarterly benchmarking club report alongside Frimley ICS. RBWM, and Bracknell Forest.
 - ✓ Continue participation in Southeast benchmarking forums [both social care and education]
 - ✓ Continue to report key SEND 0-25 KPIs to SBC leadership, SCF leadership, Frimley leadership, DfE Commissioners, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [DLUHC] Commissioners.
 - ✓ Continue to return monthly “DfE Wave” surveys.
 - ✓ Continued case level information sharing between SBC and BHFT.
 - ✓ Continued case officer level performance analysis informing person-level support and coaching.
 - ✓ Integrated working through new access for SEND 0-25 analyst to social care system, and vice versa for social care analysts to education system.

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Priority 4	There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.
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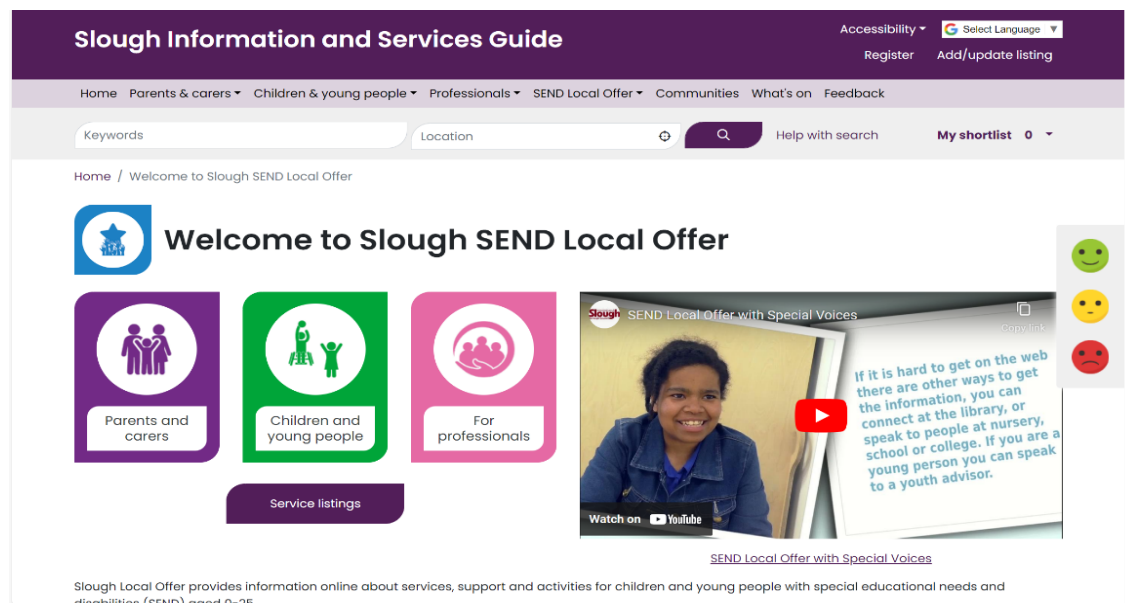
Progress on key actions

- Children, young people, and parent-carer voice gathered in EP assessments, therefore shaping EHCN assessments, SEND 0-25 Panel decisions, and EHC plans issued.
- Children, young people, and parent-carer voice included in Annual Reviews.
- Children, young people, and parent-carer feedback questionnaire developed and available to Case Officers.
- Children and young people have co-produced content for the Local Offer [see links and screenshots below].
- SENDIASS continues to have positive use from parents and carers.
- Professionals attending parent-carer network sessions.
- Preparation for Adulthood Strategy shared with CYP and Special Voices for consultation.

New Local Offer website:

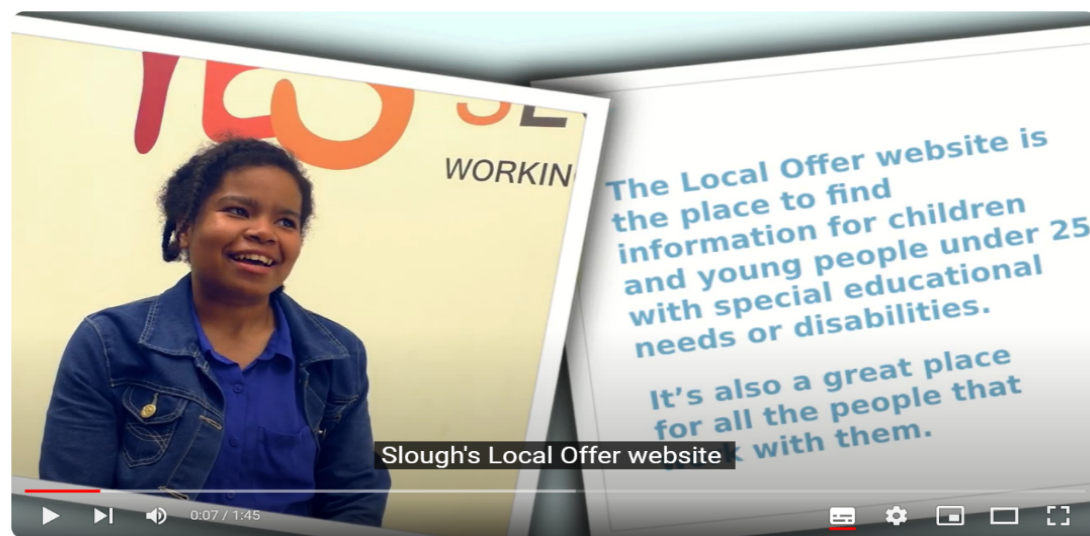
Landing Page

[Slough Information and Services Guide | Welcome to Slough SEND Local Offer \[idoxgroup.com\]](http://sloughinformationandservicesguide.com)



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Local Offer co-produced video on YouTube <https://youtu.be/QwxLCb4ytIU>



SEND Local Offer with Special Voices

Unlisted

Slough Slough Borough Council
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Evidence of impact

- “Special Voices” parent-carer feedback gathered regularly and shared with key decision-makers [latest example is included in evidence folder for Priority 3].
- Questionnaire / Self Evaluation for SEND 0-25 practices in settings in Slough. Distributed 1st Week November.
- Positive feedback from children involved in co-production activity for Local Offer.

Key next steps

- The Local Offer launch is imminent. [See screenshot above of website in testing.]
- There will be young people and parent-carer representatives in the new Strategic Transition Group.
- A local area, multi-agency attended, ‘Youth Voice’ conference will be held in the new year.
- Consultation with parents and YP around schools’ strategies.
- Autism course [4 sessions] to be delivered to parents within schools.
- “DFN Project Search”. Supported Internship Model. Presentation for parent-carers and to young people from “Together as One” and “The Autism Group”.

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Priority 5	The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.
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Progress on key actions

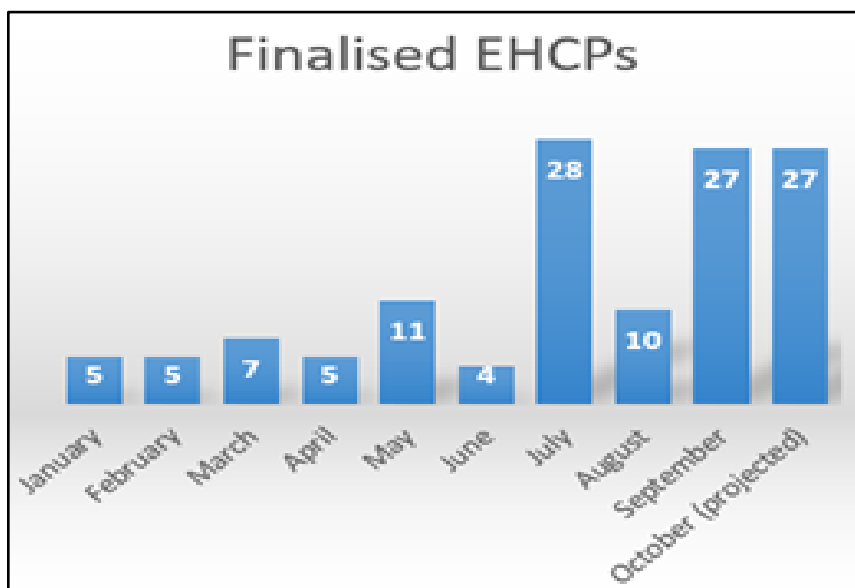
- An experienced Principal Educational and Child Psychologist in post since the 1st of September 2023. This has enabled us to increase the amount of psychological advice being allocated.
- The newly appointed PEP monitoring quality of EP advises and working with team of agency psychologists to improve quality of reporting.
- A new role of operational lead was created and appointed to develop and implement standard operating procedures [SoP's].
- Standard operating procedures manual and SEND 0-25 handbook for internal staff and professionals prepared at draft stage which will be sent out for circulation and workshops in November 2023. This includes clear indication of roles and responsibilities built into SoP's for consistency of process and accountability.
- Management meets 3 times weekly to ensure direct lines of communication of expectations, roles and responsibility and to respond to and clarify any problems or misunderstandings quickly.
- Ongoing programme of weekly full Team Meetings and training/updates to ensure consistency and understanding of standard operating procedures.
- 1:1 formal supervision scheduled for all SEND 0-25 Service Staff with line managers fortnightly. Weekly sub-team meetings with each manager's individual teams.
- There is an acknowledgement that our Capita system historically has areas of weakness in the data. We have allocated specific support via a member of the data team to work on SEND 0-25 data quality and reporting mechanisms.
- The Live Case Tracker has been implemented to ensure clarity and consistency of process recording to run concurrently with Capita allowing for clearer accountability and cross validation of data.
- Capita Training program ongoing with SEND 0-25 officers and Business Support Officer to ensure all fields are being completed to promote better data output and reporting.
- All draft EHC plans are being quality assured by Team managers prior to issuing within the new assessment framework.

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- All SEND 0-25 Officers are involved in weekly training around developing quality of EHC plan writing, including writing effective and appropriate outcomes.
- The EHC plan template has been fully revised and updated to improve quality of plans and ensure a clearer link between assessed needs, provisions and outcomes.

Evidence of impact

- 40 psychological advice requests are being allocated per month from October onwards, there is an interim team of agency EPs now working together to help reduce the current outstanding reports.
- All psychological advice requested from October 1st is predicted to meet the 6-week time scale.
- In addition, the advice is being professionally quality assured to British Psychological Society Standards.
- EP reports are being received in a timely fashion and this is leading to an increase in the number of EHC plans over the twenty weeks that are being finalised, reducing the backlog. An increase in the number of newly agreed assessments that are completed within the 20-week timeframe has also being evidenced.
- At the last review in June there were 130 unallocated EP assessments, and this has now been reduced to 80. There were 40 EP reports received into the SEND 0-25 team in October 2023. The quality of advice was sufficient to allow 47 draft plans to be written and quality assured. All finalised plans are being issued on a new template.



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- Embedding agreed standard operating procedures ensures workflows are all consistent and actions are based on legislation and statutory timeframes, including our data reporting systems.
- A significant increase in the number of EHC plans being finalised in the period July to October 2023, as compared with the period Jan-June 2023 [see graph on previous page].
- New data reporting process will provide more accurate performance data.
- Improved case tracking feeding directly into 1-to-1 Supervision and feedback to SEND 0-25 Officers.

Key next steps

- A programme of training sessions to be delivered weekly on new Standard Operating Procedures [SOP] for each workflow area. This will assure and ensure understanding of expectations and will embed new processes. The new processes will be shared at the next monitoring visit.
- A Task and Finish group will continue to meet in order to map the move towards opening the professional portal with a pilot before the end of the spring term 2024, and then the parent portal – which ultimately allows us to digitally coproduce the EHC plans by summer of 2024. This directly links into Priority 3.
- Work with Special Voices on how to involve young people in the quality assurance process.
- Finalise multi-agency involvement and quality assurance framework.
- Finalise standard operating procedures manual and SEND 0-25 Handbook for internal staff with input and revision from stakeholders by Jan 2024.
- Multi-Agency involvement and QA framework to encourage settings/professionals and officers to consider this as a checklist when completing amendments, writing and supporting an application to be drafted and shared with Health and Social care colleagues for their input.

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Priority 6	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children’s social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.
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Progress on key actions

Short Breaks

- Increased Short Breaks’ provision continues to be provided and bespoke to families, driven by the commissioning framework in children’s social care.
- Packages of Care tailored to meet a child’s unique needs and cover respite from weekdays, weekends and overnights. Between April 2021 and October 2023 there has been a 140% increase in commissioned packages of care for children receiving residential short breaks and 153 children have received a package of support which included a short break.
- With partners Social Care also work to provide targeted support through activities such as school holiday clubs and after school activities. At the time of reporting there were over 1999 sessions accessed by 20 families.

‘Breakaway’

- The service continues to offer in excess of 90 overnight stays each month on average with extra capacity given to ‘day care’ hours and emergency respite and support throughout.

Working together

- Childrens Social Care now have joint working arrangements with the Virtual School, Early Help and the SEND 0-25 Team including: shared monitoring visits, working with the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO and detailed partnership work on provisions for children with very complex needs.
- This includes shared budgets and spending to save options. This is becoming an operational norm and strength and joined up challenge, critical friend support and tangible working and supporting together. This particularly so with Children Looked After [CLA] cohort and between the Virtual School and SEND 0-25. There is a professional urgency between services to avoid log jams in the system for CLA.
- This working together and shared solution focused thinking, in spite and despite the different statutory duties, is positively, tangibly permeating Social Care and SEND 0-25 staff. There is more to do.
- More joined up working can be evidenced in working together with Children Missing Education and the Fair Access Panel. This has continued joint staff involvement and support [telling the ‘whole story’] the education for our most

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vulnerable young people and reintroduce those pupils Missing Education and Missing *in* Education back to an appropriate provision.

- SEND 0-25 officers continue to benefit enormously by having access to the Social Care system so that they may crosscheck/ read, in real time, information regarding context and activity of Social Care interventions [or not] for children with an EHC plan or for EHCNAs.
- As SEND 0-25 Officers continue to have this access and link it to the Capita recording, a more holistic and timely decisions and actions can be evidenced. Both SEND 0-25 and Childrens Social Care can speak, meet and discuss using the same language for a clearer picture of the young person. If there is a question the openness with staff problem solves together on what can be done not what cannot.

Transitions

- The quarterly Transition Panel continues to meet, co-chaired by Children and Adult social care. This panel reviews all children with complex needs aged 14 and over moving to adulthood. At 31/05/23 the panel continues to track 73 children through transition. Each quarterly meeting over the last year has directly addresses the pathway of 22 young people on average.

Evidence of impact

- Joint working on issues and cases that cross over has become increasingly the norm, with several examples, including spend to save options.
- Short Breaks continue to be provided and the rate of and type of provision continues to be sustained and exceeded in some areas.
- Shared budget on provisions with Social Care, NHS and SEND 0-25 can be evidenced and are increasingly sought. There is very robust discussion to evidence VFM by all agencies when they meet.
- SEND 0-25 have not placed any children in Out of Area Placements since 15th March 2023 and continues not to do so up until 31/10/2023.

Key next steps

- Joint Commissioning with Social Care, NHS and SEND 0-25 needs maturing especially around therapies.
- Livid experience from all activities needs to be collected, analysed and triangulated to inform services, along with standard granular metrics, and these qualitative assessments used to improve users' experiences.
- Challenge back to all, on all, around 'You said, we did' and 'So what' must be part of SBC improvement journey and taking stock.
- SBC needs to embrace co production as always inherent not an add on.

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Priority 7	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.
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Progress on key actions

Of the remaining actions still open since the WSoA update in June 23 [either closed or moved to BAU], key areas of progress are described below:

- Scoping of service for CYP aged over five who are likely to require dysphagia [eating and drinking support] has been carried out, SLA now signed and Arbor vale School managing service across both Special [and mainstream provision if required].
- Sustained and focused implementation of the OT Plan to reduce waiting times.
- Senior Health representation is now embedded in SEND 0-25 Panels and are involved with triaging decisions.
- Quarter 2 data has indicated that there has been a 68% increase in referrals to OT across East Berkshire compared to the same period 22-23. Despite the significant and growing increase in the number of referrals made to the OT service, referrals for Q2 have been managed [with just 1 exception] within a 2-week time frame.

In Slough 100% of CYP are now waiting less than 52 weeks with an average wait time of 23 weeks [stretch target is 100%]. Longest wait times for Q2 have decreased from 89 weeks in Q1 to 70 weeks in Q2. Those that are waiting longer are referrals where triage has commenced but not yet completed and where the clinicians are waiting for additional information from the referrer or family to enable the triage process to be completed. Mapping and monitoring of referral data is now embedded as business as usual and used consistently to help plan the timely allocation to triage.

- Continuing signposting for waiting well - Increased signposting and support for those who are waiting well is now live. BHFT Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies [CYPIT] live toolkit menu went live on the Frimley Healthier Together platform and was added to Slough Local offer. The Resource was evaluated, feedback captured and reviewed in July 2023 and version 2 has incorporated the feedback for further improvements.

The WSOA actions completed as of October 2023 are:

7.6.1 and 7.6.2 - Reduction in the number of children and young people both in mainstream school and at Arbour Vale School with outstanding SLT

- reviews/assessments as outlined within their EHC plan.
- Action completed – backlog identified through the SEND 0-25 Inspection and identified as an action has been cleared.

7.3.2 - Ensure we have a fully commissioned eating and drinking service for all children in Slough.

- Action completed.

7.6.3 - Deliver universal and targeted training to all 18 schools in the currently commissioned contract to support school staff in implementing the ‘Graduated Response.’

A comprehensive training offer for all integrated therapies to schools is being addressed through the integrated therapies project and will form part of the new commissioned service.

- Moved to BAU

7.6.1 - Ensure all CYP with EHC plans within the 17 mainstream schools covered by the current commissioned contract with BHFT are seen for a review/up-to-date assessment of their needs.

- Completed – backlog identified through the Inspection.

7.6.2 - Ensure all CYP who attend Arbour Vale School and have identified speech and language therapy needs on their EHC plan are seen and have their needs reviewed/reassessed.

- Action completed – backlog identified through the SEND 0-25 Inspection and identified as an action has been cleared.
- All remaining actions outlined within Area 5 have been BRAG rated and a health status of the overall working group completed and shared via the Slough SEND 0-25 Strategic Board. The remaining outstanding actions from the WSOA are:
 - Green [progressing]:

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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.

Q2 data shows that 100% of Slough Children were assessed within 12 months which achieves the stretch target for June 2023. We will continue with our action plan with a focus on maintaining achievements and improving where possible.

7.5.2 - Improve compliance with EHCA 6-week target – target 95%

- In the June 23 update the EHCNA compliance data was stable and averaging around 60% monthly. For the last period this has increased to 67%. The current challenges continue to be the high numbers of requests for children not known to service across East Berkshire. We continue to actively try to reduce these numbers and look at innovation from other areas to address this challenge. In Slough we coproduce so we get the right support, at the right time, in the right place for children/young people and their families and ourselves.

Evidence of impact

- New Dysphagia service has now been launched which will greatly support children and young people and their families.
- Cohesive and consistent multi-agency working leads to improved decision making and planning processes to better meet the needs of CYP in a timely way.
- The continuing reduction in wait times for children and young people and their families in Slough means they are not struggling for longer than they need to with everyday activities such as being able to focus on a classroom at school. The small numbers that are waiting are offered interim support and signposting.

Key next steps

- The key focus for the next steps is to address the two outstanding actions.
 - ✓ Improving EHC plan compliance
 - ✓ Improving waiting times

Slough Borough Council
Safety Value Intervention Programme/High Needs Budget
Deficit Recovery Plan

15 September 2023: Summary Update Report

Date Submitted	15 Sept 2023
Signed off by Director of Children's Services	
Signed off by S151 Officer	

Summary:

Slough Borough Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets set out in its Safety Valve Agreement.

The provisional outturn position for 2022-23 is an overspend on all DSG blocks of £0.097m with an overspend on the High Needs DSG Block of £0.407m. This contrasts with a forecast overspend on all DSG Blocks at quarter 3 of 2022-23 of £1.638m.

2023-24 Period 5 Budget Management report for High Needs DSG has total forecast spend of £22.3m against a budget of £25.1m. The SEND Team is currently working on a backlog of 290 EHCP's which could see additional forecast spending of £2.6m in high needs top-up funding. This would give an overall projected spend of £24.9m, and an estimated underspend of 0.2m in 2023-24.

Overall, in 2023-24 the four DSG blocks are projected an underspend of £0.6m (£0.3m in schools block, £0.2m in high needs block and £0.1m in the early years block).

More work is being undertaken to refine our modelling forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 update report.

On August 4th this year, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Statutory Direction to SBC in relation to its SEND services. This was due to a lack of progress made to address the seven areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report from October 2021. The evidence regarding lack of progress was obvious at the DFE Monitoring Visit that took place at the end of February this year and from reports from the Department for Education (DFE) appointed Commissioner

and SEND Adviser.

The DFE stated that they are aware that there has been “considerable change in senior leadership at SBC” in recent months and that the new team are “determined and motivated to bring positive change”. Nevertheless, the local authority fully accepts the Statutory Direction and agrees that it was clear that the area had failed to make sufficient progress against the areas of significant weaknesses at the time of the DFE visit.

As a result, the remit of the Children’s Services Commissioner, Paul Moffatt, will be extended to include SBC SEND functions.

Department for Education (DFE) Monitoring Visit July 2023

The feedback from the DFE officials attending the latest monitoring visit acknowledged the demanding work that has been put into improving SEND 0-25 services in Slough since the start of March. The SEND Partnership Board new project reporting and data dashboard now provides a good understanding of the quality of the services being provided. Whilst the improvements made were too recent to have made a significant difference to the quality of SEND 0-25 service, the monitoring evidence showed early signs of improvement.

Several key actions that had been taken were shared with the DFE officials including the establishment of a Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board providing strategic oversight, a data dashboard measuring performance against agreed KPIs and a live cases dashboard to support decision making for individual pupils.

Shortly after the visit, the latest monthly reporting to the DFE included the fact that 28 EHC plans had been finalised in July. This is the most in one month since the inspection and included 5 that had been completed within statutory timescales which is again the best performance since 2021. The key factors in this change of performance are the changes to the team and the sourcing of more locum educational psychologists to complete assessments. Although this is very encouraging and evidences the improvement in the service, it is not yet at the level of the service in 2020 when around 30-35 plans were completed each month. Given that some of the teams are still inexperienced, new officers are now in place and that systems are still being improved, it is hoped that this level will be achieved (and potentially surpassed) in the new term and the team are determined to maintain this standard moving forwards.

Agreement Condition 1	Assurance Level		
Managing demand for Education Health Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) and Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs)	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	GREEN	RAG

Progress Update:

Action taken to date.

The following actions have been taken forward:

- the SEND Statutory team has been developed both in terms of staffing and processes to ensure that the Code of Practice is effectively and efficiently followed. 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 alongside additional locum EPs (Educational Psychology). 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 now have a dedicated SEND Link Officer to improve communication and working together.
- the Chair of SEND Panel since April 2021 has ensured robust adherence to terms of reference and SEND Code of Practice (2015) ensuring transparency of decision-making and all decisions have been appropriately recorded and tracked.
- the membership of SEND Panel has widened to include regular contributions from head teachers and other agencies such as Adult Social Care and regular Health attendance.
- the SEND Commissioner (permanent post) has attended the Panel since May 2021, and this has enabled rigour and consistency in the approach to commissioning across cases and particularly for any complex cases.
- the triage process introduced in June 2021 continues to add a layer of quality assurance which ensures that all cases presented include the relevant and available evidence for the SEND Panel to make their decisions.
- proposals were shared with the Schools Forum in November 2021 to mitigate immediate risk of banding inflation at phase transfer.

These proposals ensured that, where a child or young person's CYP (Children and Young People) needs were being met under the previous banding system, this banding would be maintained at phase transfer, rather than moving to the closest matrix banding, which would typically have incurred an increase of at least £1000 per EHCP (Education Health Care Plans). These were applied to all EHCPs amended as part of the September 2022 and September 2023 phase transfer process (i.e., from February 2022 onwards).

- the following assumptions have been applied to phase transfers from 2021-2202 and 2023 where appropriate to the need of the individual CYP:
 - most pupils leaving PVI's will transfer to mainstream primaries
 - most pupils leaving mainstream primaries will transfer to mainstream secondaries with same level of funding
 - most pupils with a primary RB (Resource Bases) place will transfer to mainstream secondary or mainstream secondary RB provision
 - most pupils in primary SEN (Special Educational Needs) units will transfer to maintained/academy special school
 - most pupils leaving mainstream secondaries will transfer to a local mainstream college placement
 - most pupils leaving special school will transfer to a higher cost college placement (i.e., not an ISP)

Impact to date

There has been considerable positive impact from the above actions:

- analysis of new assessments in the first 6 months of 2022-23, compared to the same period the previous year, shows that these have increased by 2.9% year-on-year in Slough. This is consistent with the overall prediction for a 3% rise in plans this year. This has spiked slightly in the last few weeks of the Summer Term 2023 but has since reduced and we continue to be monitored closely from week to week.
- the average cost of a newly issued plan has decreased from £11,086 in July-Sept 2020 to £8,478 in July-Sept 2022; this exceeds the savings figures set out in CR4 of the Management Plan.

- the proportion of newly issued plans designated mainstream as type had increased from 81% to 92% and settled at +/- 90% with some fluctuation at times e.g., mover ins and phase transfers.

Ensuring Sustainability of Changes and Future Plans

The processes at the SEND Panel need to remain fully embedded to ensure ongoing rigour and transparency. Focus needs to remain on quality and outcomes for CYP with SEND, while also having regard for the financial envelope. particular focus will remain the timeliness of issuing of final plans as the system continues to become more robust.

More detailed proposals on updating the banding matrix will go to Schools Forum in March 2024. This will ensure that:

- the existing models used by statistical neighbours and other South-East authorities are fully considered and benchmarked against Slough.
- descriptors are reviewed to ensure that decisions regarding banding accurately reflects the provision that the LA (Local Authority) must fund through top-up in line with each EHCP.
- any EHCPs assimilated from previous system can be funded at a level which reflects provision required without arbitrary inflation due to a lack of 'like-for-like' banding increment.
- proposals are fully modelled both operationally and financially to ensure that needs are met while keeping regard to sustainability and the existing financial envelope.

Agreement Condition 2	Assurance Level		
Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS)	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	NEEDS REVIEW	RAG

Progress Update:

Action taken to date.

The following actions have been taken forward:

- rigorous panel processes ensure and assure that only CYP whose needs cannot be met at local Maintained Provisions are being placed in INMSS.
- consultation processes have been strengthened and INMSS schools are only being consulted with where appropriate

- commissioning is being better informed and quality, appropriateness and value for money are the key considerations. Spend to save options must be produced on any expenditure or suggestion of an out of area OOA (Out of Area) placement.
- 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 (Specialist Resource Provision) provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs agreed for each setting will be issued.
- all CYP attending Independent Non-Maintained Providers have been identified and at Annual Review all these cases are being audited to ensure this is the most appropriate placement to meet need. NASS type contracts have been renewed and IPA have been scrutinised and updated.
- at key transitions consideration is given to whether these placements are still the most appropriate placement for the CYP. A PfA {Preparing for Adulthood} Lead officer has been appointed to assure annual reviews consider ceasing EHCPs as appropriate. PfA will now be starting before NCY 9.
- all INMSS Providers have/are being met by the Group Manager for Inclusion and SEND Commissioner to review the cost of placements and to renegotiate costings if appropriate.
- officers have compared the data against bench marking exercise which have occurred with other Southeast authorities, and we now know joint commissioning opportunities are likely to be limited across the Southeast as schools who are used frequently by other authorities are not ones Slough use.

Impact to date

Ensuring Sustainability of Changes and Future Plans

It is important to reiterate that without continued scrutiny thorough SEND Panel process and rigour of decision making these numbers could very easily increase so panel processes are being further developed and there is now health (SLT) and social care representation:

- the ongoing work with East Berkshire needs to develop to ensure more effective joint commissioning to better meet the “East Berks’ area” needs and to thus have more cost-effective placements and better joined up working and decision making. The local commissioning working is focussing on high-cost providers and how we can more effectively commission places and manage the market. There is a development of a new Joint Commissioned contract with RBWM, Bracknell Forest BC and Slough for a Joint Therapies contract with Frimley ICB. Short term Contracts have been issued until March 2025 whilst the unique Joint Commission is agreed.
- a joint working party of the three LAs (local authorities) has been formed and meets the SEND Commissioner ensuring that we are securing agreement with Providers around costings and uplifts, also to ensure effective contract management.
- benchmarking data from across the Southeast demonstrates that our numbers are below those of our similar local authorities and we need to continue to ensure wherever possible not to use the INMSS sector for non-complex children. We have stopped an extremely expensive OoA placement of one pupil by a spend to save option using our own Special school. This has ‘saved’ a projected £670K over the next 10 years.
- when parents express a preference, SEND officers now work with them around the graduated response and most appropriate local setting to meet need. Highlighting Ofsted outcomes of some local INMSS and Section 41 status so parents have a full understanding all the information to make an informed choice.

Agreement Condition 3	Assurance Level		
Post-16	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	GOOD	RAG

Progress Update:

Action taken to date.

The following actions have been taken forward:

- data has been audited and all post-16 placements identified with costs.

- a new operational policy for ceasing EHC plans and ensuring that young adults receive the right support moving forward has been agreed to ensure consistency and efficiency.
- any EHCPs which may need to cease have reviews and actions underway to send cease to maintain letters.
- decisions at SEND Panel are ensuring that YP's placements are agreed after taking into consideration their aspirations but also ensuring quality of placements and value for money.
- decisions to continue to fund young people for the same courses in different institutions are being challenged and only agreed if it can be demonstrated that a key outcome is still to be achieved.
- individual placement costings are being scrutinised and where necessary being challenged.
- all placements now have a contract and an Individual Partnership Agreement (IPA) in place.
- all Year 14 placements are being scrutinised to ensure that there is an exceptional reason for why they need to stay in a school placement. transition plans at Years 9, 11 and 13 are being put in place to ensure that the assumption of Year 14 places in school are no longer the norm.
- all colleges have been met with to discuss both the LA and the settings statutory duties toward YP with EHC plans. These meetings are also allowing discussions around the importance of progression in courses and the need to have clear transition plans to leave college.
- more effective commissioning arrangements are being discussed with other Southeast LAs.
- more effective commissioning arrangements are being discussed with colleges and options to commission bespoke courses for Slough CYP are being investigated and costed
- work is underway with SEND Officers and Enhance EHC plan writers to ensure consistent quality of Post 16 Plans particularly around the clarity of provision in Section F. To ensure that the range of college providers can deliver with confidence and all costings then can specifically reflect the updated Plan.

Impact to date

There has been considerable positive impact from the above actions:

- where appropriate plans have been ceased and/or lower cost local alternative placements have been identified. This has enabled predicted cost reductions for 2021-22 and 2022-23 to be met in full.

Ensuring Sustainability of Changes and Future Plans

- a transition group is being developed which will be chaired by the AD (Associate Director) of Adults' Services and will work with all stakeholders including young people to ensure that clear pathways are in place to enable a smooth transition into other services if appropriate.
- it is important to reiterate that without continued thorough SEND Panel processes and rigour of decision making these numbers could very easily increase exponentially.
- working with Orchard Hill college (Specialist) and BCA (Berkshire College Agricultural) and Langley College, part of the Windsor Forest Group {WFG} to develop proposals around a specific provision to meet the needs of young people with social communication difficulties who have struggled to engage with the school curriculum in Key Stages 4 and 5. This has been identified as a gap in the Local Offer and for some of these youngsters they have had their needs met in PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) Provision which has not always been successful in ensuring their future inclusion in mainstream colleges.
- a more detailed proposal of how this will look will be developed after further meetings. Both colleges are keen to engage with Slough and there may be a capital bid related to this scheme.
- further development work with the WFG to look at development of the foundation courses and increase in placements to meet more YP's needs locally is being planned. Further development round the BCA/Langley College SEND Offer.

Agreement Condition 4	Assurance Level		
Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs)	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	GOOD	RAG

Progress Update:

Action taken to date.

The following actions have been taken forward:

- increased scrutiny of which CYP are placed in Slough ARPs, to ensure that only CYP with an ARP (Additional Resource Provision) identified in their EHC plan are filling a commissioned place.
- two primary ARPs which are currently functioning as SEN Units have consulted to ensure that this status can be reflected in their SLA with Slough to ensure that CYP are placed appropriately.
- one small primary ARP (8 commissioned places) closed in July 2022 following a consultation with stakeholders, due to difficulty in sustaining delivery to the small number of complex CYP for which it had ARP capacity. New placements were required for September 2022 where required (this was of negligible impact overall as the number of CYP requiring alternative placement totalled 5)
- one ARP is to reduce from 60 by a decrease in 10-20 places over the next 2-3 years. This is as result of the proportion of statutory SEND CYP in relation to mainstream Published Admission Number (PAN) becoming unsustainable, particularly as the school's PAN is due to decrease as part of Slough's Place Planning Strategy.
- agreement made with our all-through special school to ensure that all our commissioned places are focused on years 0 to 13. Commissioning of Nursery and Year 14 exception placements will occur separately to maximise placements for CYP aged 4 to 18 years and in line with the High Needs Block Guidance.
- increase in SEND EHC plan commissioned placements for September 2022 onwards within our secondary special school.
- SLAs have been re-drafted and scrutinised with legal advisors and sent to settings for consultation feedback
- The process of consulting with ARPs both when issuing new EHC plans and for phase transfers, has been made more robust to ensure full compliance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015)

Ensuring Sustainability of Changes and Future Plans

- regular contract monitoring meetings, to monitor new SLAs
- newly embedded processes must be maintained to ensure compliance
- contract monitoring and data monitoring need to be considered when looking at future place planning within the SEND sector. Resilience built into system to ensure that additional places can be commissioned in our ARPs and special schools to address population changes in a timely manner (see Risk and Resilience section).

Agreement Condition 5	Assurance Level		
Alternative Education Provision	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	GOOD	RAG

Progress Update:

Action taken to date.

The following actions have been taken forward:

- the LA has reviewed benchmarking data from different authorities all who have differing models. Most provide the minimum statutory provision (6th day following a permanent exclusion) and some preventative places where schools either fund most of the place or fund top up above the £10,000 base funding. The numbers for these preventative places are significantly lower than those provided by Slough.
- unusually, Slough has not got a strong alternative education offer within a broader market, unlike some of the other authorities in the South-East, and this appears to be due mainly to the fact that the LA has fully funded full time AP (Alternative Provision) places at Haybrook School and Littledown School so schools have not needed to look elsewhere to purchase or fund their AP Provision. The model of AP provided in Slough fails to have regard for the DfE (Department for Education) definition of AP with most costs being borne by the LA as opposed to Schools.
- the existing model is not sustainable and cost reductions have been put forward around a more manageable costing to reflect the LA's Statutory Responsibilities around Permanent Exclusions. Cost Reductions have been proposed over a three-year period to mitigate impact and allow the schools to develop other models of delivery with schools.
- discussions have started with both existing AP Providers. This area requires significant systemic change.

Impact to date

There has been considerable positive impact from the above actions:

- Actions implemented to reduce commissioned numbers have achieved a cost reduction of £538k for the year 2022-23, and

projected savings for the project overall are set out in Table 3 below.

Ensuring Sustainability of Changes and Future Plans

- AP costs in Slough are likely to remain disproportionately high compared to our statistical neighbours unless there is a strong, clear strategy which highlights Academies and Maintained Schools' statutory responsibilities toward vulnerable CYP.
- The development of a stronger market for AP Providers from different sectors would allow for a better range of vocational options for children, young people and their families and would introduce an element of competition to the market for schools and the LA
- Current proposals to reduce LA-commissioned places over the next 3 years will deliver the following savings:

Risk 1	Assurance Level		
Financial	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>High Needs budget could continue to experience escalating cost pressures due to a continued increase in demand for EHCPs and top up funding and complexity of need which can only be met in the independent sector. Cost Reductions are not as high as estimated, increase demand leading to increase commissioning of places, increased costs linked to addressing increase legal challenge.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>There is pressure both in terms of demand for EHC plans and existing settings requesting larger than usual cost of living inflationary increases. The Council has agreed a maximum uplift policy which we have been able to meet so far.</p> <p>We are currently managing the demand and the wider delivery project with Arbour Vale School and other settings is designed to meet future demand without increasing the use of INMSS settings.</p> <p>However, the joint commissioning / SEND Place Planning will continue to monitor this closely to ensure that this continues to be managed effectively in the future.</p>			
Risk 2	Assurance Level		
Service Delivery	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>Challenges around sufficiency of the market. Turnover of staff impacting on workforce capacity and skill set.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>As above, joint commissioning and wider delivery programmes will ensure that any sufficiency issues are addressed. New members of the SEND Statutory team have brought greater experience, knowledge, and examples of best practice. New operational processes and guidance, alongside a programme of training, ensure that all officers are empowered and will encourage greater retention of staff. As a result, the high turnover of staff did not continue in the summer term 2023.</p>			

Risk 3	Assurance Level		
Reputational	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
Increase in Corporate complaints, dissatisfaction among stake holders, negative publicity.			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>The level of complaints has remained high until recently. In the last few weeks, a new complaints policy and next steps planning approach has resolved several concerns. The service is also receiving regular compliments from service users.</p> <p>The service continues to work closely with Special Voices, our Parent Carer Forum, including regularly regular surveys. This means that we will track service user satisfaction and dissatisfaction without simply relying on complaints. Similarly link officers for all schools can better understand concerns and measure improvement by talking to SENCos and other education leaders.</p> <p>Another key piece of work moving forward will be better understanding of the lived experiences of our children and young people with SEND.</p>			
Risk 4	Assurance Level		
Legal/Regulatory	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Watch	RAG
Increased risks of legal challenge by way of appeal and judicial review and increased risk of complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>Recent tribunal decisions have been decided in favour of the Council and we are not seeing the elevated level of appeals that other LAs are experiencing. We have seen several complaints to the LGSCO (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) but have been able to resolve most of these through mediation to avoid judgements that could have financial and reputational implications. This will need to be monitored closely and so we have RAG rated this as Amber.</p>			

Risk 5	Assurance Level		
Economic	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>Unanticipated changes in demographics and cost of living/ inflationary pressures. Risks to jobs and workforce if cost reductions are made to quickly and too soon.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>There is no evidence of issues around the speed of cost reductions. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children with complex needs has been identified as a potential risk but is not yet affecting our financial progress.</p>			

Mitigation 1	Assurance Level		
Alternative Education Provision	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>There is significant stake holder scrutiny around this project (particularly head teachers.) There is a three-year Plan in place and the project is in Year 1 now; savings have already been achieved within timescale. Mitigations in place are a Project Group led by the SEND Commissioner and this group will run for the next three years. This will ensure any issues and areas of concern are addressed. New ways of working are being developed which moves the emphasis on commissioning AP Provision to the school rather than Stake Holders viewing the Local Authority as the sole Commissioner. The LA will continue to meet its Statutory duty for six-day provision for permanently children and some preventative placements allocated via a multi-agency panel.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>A new working party looking at exclusions and AP provision has been formed to ensure that school leaders views and daily experiences are considered in our Council policies and practice. There is a growing recognition that non statutory, preventative AP placements should not be funded by the High Needs Block unless there is a proven spend-to-save model.</p>			
Mitigation 2	Assurance Level		
Post 16 Provision	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>The main risk within the Post 16 Sector at present is the merger of BCA College to become a part of the Windsor Forest Group. This means that Slough is now the host Authority and commissions places across the Group. There have been several meetings to ensure that Slough commission the correct number of places for the group across the local area. Further meetings are occurring with all Berks and Bucks LAs to ensure we can work together to have more effective place planning. It has been identified that ongoing work is required at phase transfer for Years' 9, 11 and 13/14 to ensure that young people's pathways are appropriate for achieving their preparation for adulthood (PfA) outcomes; mitigations include the bolstering of SEND team staff in a dedicated post-14 team, to focus on PfA and effective phase transfer processes. Potential capital projects are also being explored to increase of range of placements and accessible pathways.</p>			

Progress update:

A new PfA approach is being designed and post 16 places have a high priority in our overall sufficiency and place planning work. Sufficiency of places has not been a significant issue at the start of the new academic year.

Mitigation 3	Assurance Level		
Managing demand (EHCNAs/EHCPs)	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	RAG	Good	RAG

Mitigations here are inbuilt and based on rigorous process and decision-making, which is already seeing an impact. In addition, there is potential for capital projects to support commissioning of places as population fluctuates (this is anticipated and planned for), and these are being incorporated into the current draft of the Council's Place Planning Strategy (draft to be scrutinised at next Cabinet meeting).

Progress update:

The capital programme is being agreed by Cabinet and further details will be shared in the next quarter monitoring paper.

Mitigation 4	Assurance Level		
Inflation	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG

The High Needs block funds pupil placements in schools and further education establishments, and this represents 81.25% of total forecast expenditure. This expenditure is split between base funding of £10,000 per pupil and top-up funding. The base funding has been flat for the last couple of years and has not attracted any inflationary increases. Top-up funding in Slough BC represents some of the highest payments to providers than anywhere else within England. One of our key cost reductions is focused around reducing top-up funding to all providers, therefore, it would not be appropriate to add inflationary increases to funding we want to reduce. Expenditure on the remaining 18.75% of High Needs expenditure should attract inflationary increases. We are forecasting 4% inflation in 2023-24 and 2% in subsequent years

Progress update:

SBC is carefully managing requests for inflationary increases from 3rd party providers to keep inflationary increases within our forecasts. This is being off-set by increased in-borough provision by 3.4% in line DFE funding guidance.

Resilience	Assurance Level		
	16 June 2023	15 Sept 2023	15 Dec 2023
	N/A	Good	RAG
<p>The projects to reduce costs within the current plan have been carefully considered and interrogated to ensure sustainability, minimal impact on service delivery wherever possible, and best potential outcome for value and managing costs. The pace and amount have been planned to ensure stability of the workforce and continuity for stakeholders – any acceleration would need to treat with caution, due to the risk of destabilising the plan as a whole; many of the projects involve mechanisms that interlink and interact upon one another.</p> <p>To develop our resilience there is capacity within the plan for a centrally retained number of places (up to 50), which can be allocated during the lifetime of the plan should demand increase beyond our planned projections. There are also aspects of the Council’s centrally retained budget, which fund non-statutory services and posts, which can be drawn upon should there be an unplanned momentous change in demand which needs to be addressed. This gives further assurance that we can meet cost reduction targets, though use of this mechanism may impact wider service delivery within the People (Children’s) directorate.</p> <p>All cost reduction projects within the plan have detailed, year-on-year actions and outcomes outlined; this ensures that any staff new to the organisation are clear on project progress and next steps. There are succession plans in place for key roles, including the roles of commissioning and finance as well excellent work being carried out on recording procedures, systems, and processes. SEND, commissioning and finance have worked collaboratively in the formulation of this plan and will continue to do so throughout its implementation. The council has also committed addition general funding to permanent posts within the SEND team to support implementation.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>The main area for focus moving forward will be the backlog cases and managing the national increase in demand for EHC plans and special school places. However, as the rest of this report evidence, whilst we remain cautious, the current position suggests that the resilience of the plan is not a concern and the improving quality of the SEND Statutory team is a key factor in this</p>			

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2023
Subject:	Housing Resident Involvement Strategy
Lead Member:	Cllr Paul Kelly, Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes, Executive Director - Property & Housing
Contact Officer:	Chris Stratford, Associate Director - Housing
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Resident Involvement Strategy 2. Equality Impact Assessment

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the purpose and expected impact of the newly developed Housing Resident involvement Strategy to ensure meaningful opportunities for more residents (tenants and leaseholders) to influence housing services, policies and strategy that impacts them. It is also required to be compliant with the new Consumer standards from 2024.
- 1.2 The strategy has been developed in partnership with the Resident Board and shaped by feedback from other residents through survey responses and in person drop-in sessions. The strategy highlights the importance of a culture that embeds resident involvement, with implementation as everyone's responsibility.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Approve the Housing Resident Involvement Strategy at Appendix 1.
- (b) Agree to receive an annual report on the implementation of the strategy.

Reason:

Resident involvement within the housing directorate has been provided on a very limited basis with engagement process solely reliant on the established resident board for some time. The strategy with its proposed new resident involvement structure will ensure we improve our communication with residents and adopt a culture of ***nothing about***

residents without residents. This will also support compliance with the Regulator's requirements to engage and involve tenants and leaseholders in respect of influencing and shaping housing services.

Commissioner Review

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners who have no specific comments to make.

(c) Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The strategy provides a framework for resident involvement with the following five strategic themes:

1. Create a resident involvement culture.
2. Strengthen the Resident Board and resident influence.
3. Range of options for resident involvement.
4. Appropriate resources and support to enable effective involvement.
5. Inclusive and accessible engagement.

2.2 Delivering safe and healthy homes plays an important part in achieving the Council's priority of a town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives. The Housing Resident Involvement Strategy aligns well with the Council's approach to be resident focussed, enabling residents, strengthening partnership and building trust. The disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic and our financial situation has had a deep and far-reaching impact on service delivery and our residents. This refreshed approach will ensure we better serve the residents of Slough, responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to residents.

2.3 The use of residents in this report refers to both tenants and leaseholders.

Options considered

Option 1: Accept the Housing Resident Involvement Strategy in full. This is the **recommended option** particularly following contribution and support received from the Resident Board made up of tenants and leaseholders and independent chair.

Option 2: Agree specific aspects of the Housing Resident Strategy. Cabinet may choose to accept only certain aspects of the strategy and identify areas for amendment. In this circumstance, Cabinet should provide a commentary to support decision which can be shared with for the Resident Board. **This is not recommended.**

Option 3: Do not approve a new Housing Resident Involvement Strategy. The Regulator of Social Housing sets out expectations for the standards which apply to social landlords. This includes a requirement to ensure tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in policies, priorities, decision-making and scrutiny. If there is no strategy, it is difficult for tenants to understand how the Council is meeting this standard. **This is not recommended.**

Background

2.3 The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 established the framework for regulation of social housing. This has been subject to revision in terms of the national agency responsible for enforcement of the regulatory framework. The Regulator of Social

Housing's remit has most recently been strengthened by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which facilitates a new, proactive approach to regulating social housing landlords. Social landlords are obligated to comply with economic and consumer standards. The consumer standards include home, tenancy, neighbourhood and community, tenant involvement and empowerment and tenant satisfaction standards. The guidance from the Regulator of Social Housing on Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard sets out specific expectations in relation to accessibility of information and involvement and empowerment. The approach detailed in the draft strategy is required to strengthen resident involvement and ensure the Council is compliant with the standard. The feedback from the consultation with residents, relevant teams and Osborne have been used to develop our approach in this strategy.

2.4 During the month of July and August 2023, we consulted residents and other key stakeholders in a variety of ways to shape our approach in this strategy. The following summarises the consultation methods used with residents:

- Interviews with six Resident Board members and the independent chair
- Four drop-in sessions at Langley, Chalvey, The Curve and Britwell
- Online focus group
- Online survey 4-31 August with 52 participants

2.5 Interviews with the Resident Board members identified the following priorities:

- Strengthen Board's influence in key housing services decisions, with clear structure that involves working more closely with senior officers and councillors.
- Transparency and follow-through with improvement plans and regular update on progress.
- Incentive scheme and skills development for current and future resident members.
- Recruitment of more residents onto the Board.

2.6 The findings from the online survey indicated that priorities for residents included:

- Improvement to repairs service and communication of improvement plans with regular updates to residents.
- Meaningful engagement where residents' views are heard and acted upon.
- Transparency about why we may not be able to do some things that residents are telling us.
- Providing neighbourhood level involvement such as joint estate inspections with residents and residents led activities.
- Provide opportunities for resident scrutiny projects to enable service improvements influenced by recommendations from the residents' examination.
- Variety of ways for involvement to suit the diverse needs of residents.

2.7 Poor communication and lack of transparency were common themes from concerns raised by residents in addition to the above findings. This helped shape the five strategic themes listed in the introductory section of this report. Further detail about findings from consultation can be found in the strategy (Appendix 1).

(d) Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

3.1.1 There are currently budgeted two full time posts delivering resident engagement but only one is in post. This is insufficient to deliver effective implementation of the resident involvement strategy and additional staff will be recruited within existing budget. This team will be leading on embedding resident engagement into the housing service, supporting the Residents Board; coordinating Scrutiny projects looking at the housing services being provided; Building Safety Champions; Neighbourhood and Resident Led Groups working with front line staff and Leaseholder Forums.

3.1.2 As the Council aims to involve more residents, and in accordance with best practice, the strategy acknowledges the need for training, support, equipment and incentives to reduce the barriers to participation. This has financial implications.

3.1.3 The proposed strategy requires additional estimated staffing costs of £150,000 for the service to meet the requirements of the consumer standards and the Housing Regulator. The additional requirement will be reflected in the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) budgets 2024/25 to be considered by Cabinet in February. The full detailed financial implications will need to be identified, considered and included in the 2024/25 HRA budget details of which will be presented as the budget setting process which will be considered by Cabinet and subsequently full Council in February and March 2024. If the new budget needs are not adopted and approved by members at that time, then the staffing establishment outlined above will not be established and the overall involvement strategy would be undermined and would require significant review.

3.2 *Legal implications*

3.2.1 The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 established a framework for regulation of social housing. The legislative framework and the regulatory body have been amended by subsequent legislation and the new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has made further amendments. The most recent changes include a reform of the consumer regulatory regime, including making safety and transparency explicit parts of the Regulator of Social Housing's objectives.

3.2.2 The existing tenant involvement and empowerment standard is supplemented by guidance from the Regulator of Social Housing. This sets out the required outcomes and specific expectations. Under involvement and empowerment, this includes supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups, the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants, including the publication of an annual report including information on repair and maintenance budgets and providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

3.2.2 The guidance refers to a need to consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the housing management service. It also refers to the need to respond to a range of diverse needs in the way services are provided and tenants are communicated with.

3.3 *Risk management implications*

3.3.1 The following key risks have been assessed.

Risk	Assessment of risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Reputational			
Further damage to trust of the Council from lack of resident involvement and influence in housing decisions that impact tenants and leaseholders.	Med	Strategy is resident focussed and will ensure that everyone accessing housing services from the Council will be empowered and encouraged to get involved and influence service improvements.	Low
Regulatory			
Non-compliance with the regulatory framework with no current Resident Engagement Strategy in place.	High	Implementation of the strategy will ensure that the Council is compliant with the regulatory requirement and future proof for the upcoming changes to the consumer standards by the Regulator for Social Housing.	Low
Operational			
Lack of resources including staff and skills to lead the delivery of effective resident engagement.	High	Recruitment of additional staff with the right skills and behaviours to drive culture change and lead the delivery of the strategy. Becoming members of Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS) will provide staff with training and best practice in resident engagement.	Low
Lack of engagement from some staff and repairs contractor where implementation is viewed as additional workload and not beneficial.	Med	Involvement of staff in development of an action plan to ensure shared ownership, and awareness workshops will help mitigate these risks. Including resident involvement as one of the key appraisal objectives for all housing staff will also help embed a positive culture. Providing support for staff to help corporate ownership will be important.	Low
Financial			
Budget pressure	Med	The increased costs to deliver this strategy can be covered by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).	Low

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 None identified.

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.

3.5.2 The protected characteristics are: Age; Disability; Gender reassignment; Marriage and civil partnership; Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex; and Sexual orientation.

3.5.3 Inclusive and accessible engagement is one of the five themes of the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy which seeks to reduce barriers to involvement for our diverse residents improve involvement of under-represented groups within Slough.

3.5.4 Equality Impact assessment in the Appendix 2 demonstrates positive impact on groups with protected characteristics.

3.6 *Corporate Parenting implications*

3.6.1 The Council provides housing for young people leaving care and therefore as tenants they will have opportunities to link into the strategy including becoming board members, participating in focus groups and other engagement activities.

3.7 *Workforce implications*

3.7.1 Implications for the workforce are considered positive through coordinated approach to resident and community engagement across the Council and implementation of strategy that includes all housing staff, repairs contractor, internal service providers and councillors.

3.7.2 A culture where genuine consideration of residents' views is at the heart of all decision-making by staff in the delivery of housing services will help rebuild trust with residents and improve satisfaction.

3.7.3 Awareness training and engagement toolkit will be developed to support all staff to embed resident involvement in their roles.

3.8 *Property implications*

3.8.1 None identified.

4. Background Papers

4.1 Relevant background paper.

[Regulatory standards](#)

Housing Resident Involvement Strategy

2024-2027



Foreword by Cllr Puja Bedi

As the Lead Member for Housing, I particularly welcome not only the recently passed Social Housing (regulation) Act 2023 into law, but also the introduction of the standards that puts our Tenants and Leaseholders at the very heart of everything that we do, going forward. I consider this long overdue and thanks to the strict Regulator requirements, ensures that this change is not just a lip service or a tick box exercise for housing providers, but provides a genuine mechanism for improvement. It feels like a very real change that concentrates more on actions and less on excuses.

Slough Borough Council has to date, approximately 7,300 Properties, that are made up of 6,000 tenanted homes and 1,300 leaseholders, who all have a voice that should be considered. The purpose of this strategy is to lay out how we, as a Council aim to engage with our tenants and our commitment to shaping the service in a more transparent and accountable way. Resident surveys to date have been rightfully critical of our standards, our ability to complete repairs effectively and engage with Residents in a meaningful way. These are the initial views that we must use as a base line for what we do not aim to become again, as a housing provider. Undertaking impartial resident surveys ahead of the regulation change in April 2024, has meant that we have been able to have a very honest view of the current service and take stock of the challenges ahead of time. We know that we could do better, we know that residents deserve better and this strategy for housing resident involvement, sets out how we plan to engage and listen to our residents going forward. This strategy also sets out what residents can expect from the Housing Service and where it can and will be held accountable by the Housing Regulator for poor practice from 2024.

These external drivers for change, have been welcomed by the Council as it gives us a clearer framework of standards to work within, at the risk of punitive actions if we do not. From how we engage with residents, to how we maintain homes, carry out repairs and communicate better - the expectations of how we operate as a landlord are now regulated and we will be held accountable, as we should be. We should be delivering what we promise, within realistic timeframe and with continual communication with Residents as an absolute minimum.

For me, the engagement strategy really underpins everything that will come next - with the support of the Residents Board, who will have a much closer relationship with our housing teams and myself, as Lead Member. The strategy strengthens the Board's influence on the real changes and decision making that will shape the service now and in the future. I would like to see more residents recruited to the board from different age groups, with incentive schemes and skills development opportunities made available to them. It is this true engagement with residents with real lived experience of the service, that I feel will provide a better focus on what is important and will help get us to where we should be as a responsible, transparent, and proactive housing provider. The real feedback, good or bad, enables us to be proactive to the issues that matter most, like timely repairs, tackling anti-social behaviour and improving neighbourhood safety. I want to see actual change happening - clear, realistic improvements that show a clear benefit to our residents.

It is very important to me, that this strategy gives residents some reassurance of what our plan is, going forward and our commitment to offering the best service that we can - with no excuses. Listening to our Residents is paramount and to have them really being part of the drivers for change, can only lead to a service that we can all be proud of.



Some comments from members of our Resident Board

“This is a good strategy and should lead to substantially improved Council and Resident relationships”

Trevor P

“This is well written and easy for anyone to read and understand, I like that there are no jargons and the diagrams makes it very easy to understand”

Bushra

Glossary of key terms

Consumer Standards - the standards set expectations that social housing landlords must meet and that the Regulator of Social Housing will seek assurance against.

Housing staff - includes all Slough staff who work in the Housing part of the Housing, Property and Planning Directorate. This includes staff who manage the tenancies and leaseholds; staff who deal with the repairs contract; and resident engagement staff.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) - regulates registered providers of social housing in England. They want the social housing sector to be viable, efficient, well governed, and able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.

Residents - refers to tenants and leaseholders.

Tenant Satisfaction measures (TSMs) - social housing landlords must collect and publish annually from April 2024 so their residents are well informed about their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods. There are 22 tenant satisfaction measures, 10 of these will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be measured by landlords via tenant perception surveys.

Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS) - is a UK-based organisation that works to ensure tenants and leaseholders of social housing have access to advice and support to help them understand their rights and responsibilities.

NEC - is a comprehensive, flexible Housing Management platform, providing a 360° view of customers and assets. It drives automation across housing management, repairs and asset management, supporting safe communities and ensuring compliance.



Introduction

Our vision and priorities

The council recently reviewed its approach and priorities and is introducing our refreshed Corporate Plan, focused on closing the healthy life expectancy (see below). Delivering affordable, safe and healthy homes is key to our purpose and this Resident Involvement Strategy aligns well with our approach to be **resident focused**. The disruption which resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic and our financial situation has had a deep and far-reaching impact on service delivery and our residents. The refreshed approach will ensure we better serve the residents of Slough, responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to residents.

What is resident involvement and why it is important?

- How we find out what matters to our tenants and leaseholders (listen) and act to ensure safe and well-maintained homes.

- Meaningful ways that residents work closely with us to examine and influence the plans, policies and services that affect them.
- How we provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of our tenants and leaseholders to reduce barriers to involvement.
- Support and assistance for tenant and resident led activities to influence our plans, policies and services.

The tragedies of Grenfell and the death of Awaab Ishak provide a few examples of the failures of landlords to listen and act on the concerns raised by residents. Therefore, resident involvement is about **transparency, accountability and resident Influence** which leads to **service improvement and safe homes for residents**. We are accountable to our tenants and leaseholders and this Housing Resident involvement Strategy will ensure we provide more meaningful opportunities for residents to influence services, policies and strategy that impacts them. We want to work more closely with residents to put things right quickly and put residents at the heart of key housing services' decision making.

Refreshing our Corporate Plan

Our purpose

Closing the health life expectancy gap, by focussing on children

Our approach

- Resident focussed
- Providing financial sustainability
- Enabling residents and communities
- Strengthening partnerships
- Building trust

Our priorities

1. A borough for children and young people to thrive
2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives
3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough

External drivers for change - Strengthening resident engagement

- Following the Grenfell tragedy, the Government published its Social Housing White Paper to strengthen the accountability of landlords for maintaining good quality homes and services, prioritising safety, treating residents with respect and being transparent organisations.
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 became law in July 2023. This Act incorporates the requirements outlined in the Social Housing White Paper.
- The Act has provided the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) additional powers, with the ability to give unlimited fines, short-notice inspections and orders to carry out repairs.
- Social landlords must meet new consumer standards from April 2024, with the purpose of strengthening tenants' rights and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents.
- The Regulator uses a co-regulatory approach meaning Boards and Councillors are responsible for meeting the regulatory standards.
- The Building Safety Act requires a Resident Engagement Strategy for high-rise buildings to give residents more say in how their building is kept safe.

1. The Safety and Quality Standard

requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.

2. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.

Proposed Consumer Standards from April 2024 by RSH

3. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard

requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

4. The Tenancy Standard

Sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.

The most critical standard for this strategy is two, although all are important and interlink.

Methodology

During the month of July and August 2023, residents, relevant teams and our repairs contractor, Osborne, provided input which has been used to develop our approach in this strategy. The following summarises the various methods used to involve all these key stakeholders.

Resident Involvement

- Interviews with six Resident Board members and the independent chair
- Four drop-in sessions at Langley, Chalvey, The Curve and Britwell
- Online focus group
- *Online survey 4-31 August with 52 participants



Staff Involvement

Focus groups and interviews with:

- 10 housing staff including three team leaders
- 15 staff in the Customer Services Team
- Head of Communities and the Community Development Team
- Associate Director for Housing
- Cllr Puja Bedi, Lead for Housing
- The Senior Participation Officer
- The Neighbourhood Manager

Interview with four staff from Osborne including:

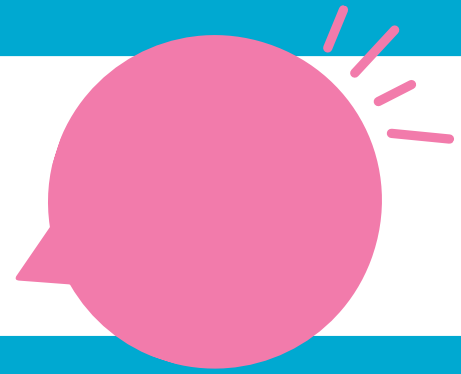
- Repairs Contract Account Manager
- Project Manager for Major Works
- Compliance Manager



Repairs contractor

*Majority of residents views were from online survey and Resident Board members

What residents told us



Resident Board

Concerns

- Low confidence in the council due to poor performance.
- Feeling of being used as a tick box and not heard.
- Lack of influence in all key housing services decisions that impact residents.

Priorities

- Strengthen Board's influence in key housing services decisions, with clear structure that involves working more closely with senior officers and councillors.
- Transparency and follow-through - improvement plan and regular update on progress.
- Incentive scheme and skills development for current and future members.
- Recruitment of more residents onto the Board.



Residents' feedback from the survey

Concerns

- Low satisfaction with repairs service and handling of ASB.
- Residents feeling that their views are not heard and when they are, not acted upon.
- Difficulty with contacting or getting a response from housing staff.
- Lack of transparency and poor communication about housing related matters.

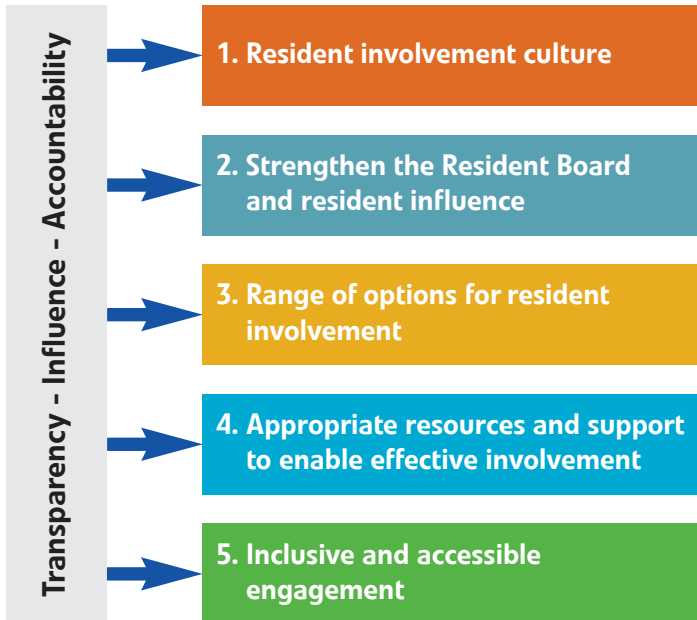
Priorities

- Effective handling of complaints and communication throughout the process.
- Improve repairs service and communicate how we plan to do this with regular updates to residents.
- Meaningful engagement - view residents as experts of their homes and involve them in shaping services, policies and strategies that impact them.
- Maintain building and neighbourhood safety.
- Act on what residents are telling us and be transparent about why we may not be able to do some things.
- Show empathy and timely respond to resident enquiries, providing updates until issues raised are resolved.
- Neighbourhood level involvement such as joint estate inspections with residents and resident-led activities.
- Provide opportunities for resident scrutiny projects to enable service improvements influenced by evidence-based recommendations.



Resident involvement strategy themes

Our strategy is based on the following five themes:



Theme 1 Resident involvement culture

We want a culture where genuine consideration of residents' views is at the heart of all our decision-making about the delivery of housing services. Creating such culture will involve every housing staff member, including the repairs contract team and councillors, taking the approach of *'Nothing about residents without residents.'* In addition, we will:

- include a resident involvement section on every Resident Board, internal report and the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee report to embed consideration of residents' views in our decision-making
- support the development and production of a council wide engagement toolkit to enable all our staff, contractors and councillors to embed effective resident involvement in our work
- include commitment and responsibility for involvement in the role description, objectives and performance reviews of all our housing staff, including senior staff

- seek input from our residents when developing activities and initiatives and include a resident involvement section on the agenda for every team meeting
- have staff and Councillor champions to help drive change
- have regular progress reporting to the Resident Board about our resident involvement activities
- record all housing resident involvement activities/consultation in a central location
- work with teams across the council for an effective, consistent and coordinated approach to engagement in accordance with the Council's community engagement strategy.

Theme 2 Strengthen the Resident Board and resident influence

We are accountable to residents who live in the homes we manage. They play a key role in ensuring we provide safe and well-maintained homes. We want to empower them to scrutinise our services and influence decisions that affect them. We will do this by:

- strengthening our co-regulation approach by improving the links between the Resident Board, lead councillor for housing and the new Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (see our new Resident Involvement Structure on page 7)
- strengthen our Resident Board panel by recruiting new members and assess the training and support needs of members. We will provide the training and resources to meet needs identified
- raising awareness of our TPAS membership and benefits to residents in terms of access to informative resources, events, forums involving other tenants and training relating to social housing and resident involvement. This will strengthen residents' knowledge, understanding and skills to keep us accountable
- providing the Resident Board and councillors a range of ways to listen to the resident views and learn from their lived experiences
- ensuring all housing services related policy reviews and strategies consider the views of residents and implications for residents of any changes

- involving residents in procurement of key services such as repairs, including specifying contract requirements, short-listing companies from tenders received, conducting interviews and site visits, and appointing the successful contractor
- using the annual report and the Housing Highlights newsletter to communicate the impact of resident involvement. Where appropriate we will use 'You said, we did' method.

Theme 3 Range of options for resident involvement

We currently have one primary resident involvement opportunity in the form of the Resident Board. We want to provide more involvement opportunities that offer flexibility so residents can be involved to the level and degree they choose (see our new Resident Involvement Structure below). Based on what residents told us from the survey, we will involve them using their preferred approach below during the life of this strategy.

- **Neighbourhood involvement** - joint estate inspections and walkabouts with residents, support and involve

tenant and resident led groups, building safety champion or complaint advocate initiatives to ensure safe neighbourhoods and effective handling of complaints. In addition, door knocking, and local resident meetings will be used to engage older residents, those with mobility issue or those that prefer this approach.

- **Scrutiny projects** - work with a group of residents for a set time to examine one aspect of our service, to identify what works well and what we can do better. We will aim to recruit residents that reflect the diversity of Slough and include young people.
- **Annual residents' event** - weekend event with an opportunity for residents to meet and engage with teams from the council, in particular housing, repairs contractor, community safety and community development. Residents will have access to information about housing services as well as support services and have a say about upcoming plans and projects.
- **Virtual involvement** - an opportunity for residents to get involved on the go or at home, at their convenience on topics that matter to them. Examples of this include an online survey, mystery shopping and online focus groups. This approach can be used for engaging young people and leaseholders.

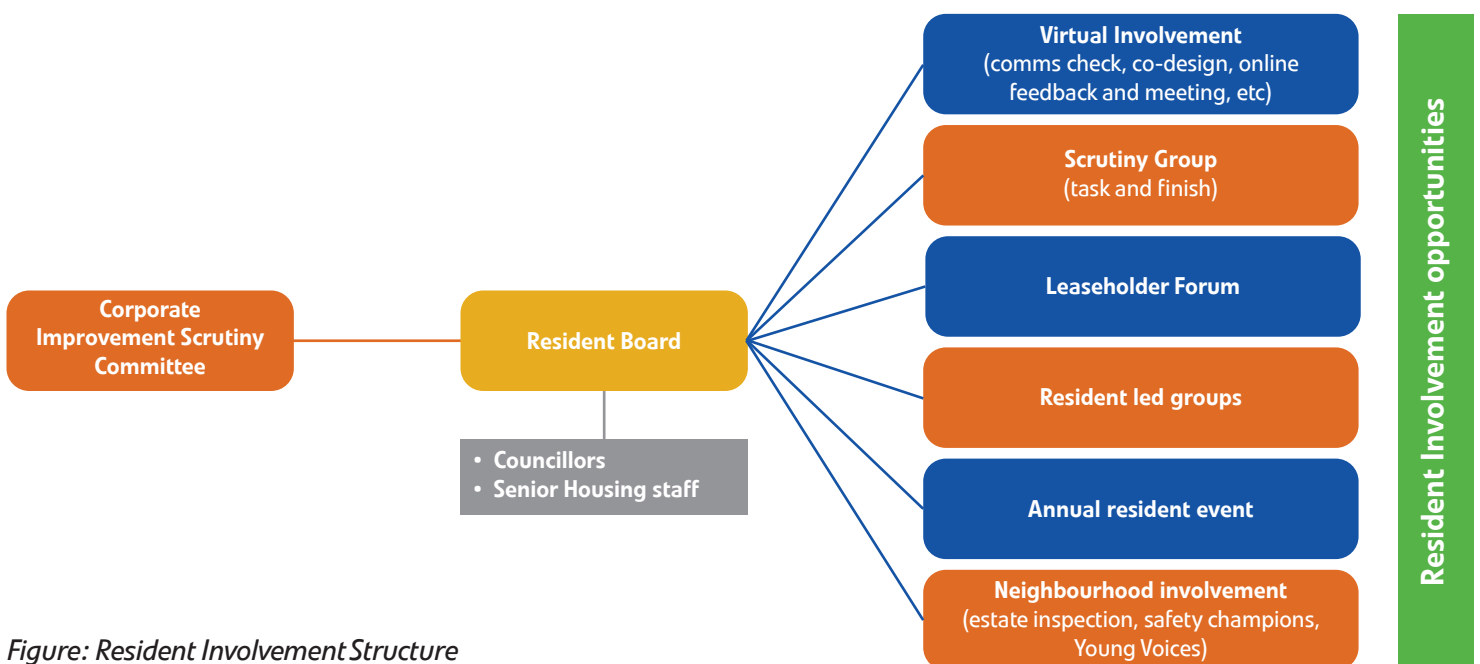


Figure: Resident Involvement Structure

Theme 4 Appropriate resources and support to enable effective involvement

Over the years, resources have withdrawn from resident involvement. We want to invest sufficient resources and appropriate support to deliver effective resident involvement and continually improve our approach. We will do this by:

- establishing a resident involvement team, led by a manager, with three officers and a support officer
- providing regular communication to residents on activities, changes and development of resident engagement
- delivering training or awareness sessions for housing staff including the RMI contract team to ensure all have a good understanding of effective resident involvement and maximise the use of our TPAS membership to keep up to date with best practice
- supporting residents' groups with skill development, advice and financial support to deliver our common aims. Ensure independent advice is available to groups if they want it through our TPAS membership
- exploring the use of existing housing systems, such as the NEC, to understand our residents better, their communication preference and involve more residents effectively
- providing dedicated financial resources, including provision of incentives to recognise residents' time, equipment, travel, training, and conferences to support effective involvement for those who require it.

Theme 5 Inclusive and accessible engagement

We will ensure that in delivering our new Resident Involvement Strategy, we are inclusive and do everything in our control to reduce barriers to involvement for our diverse residents. We will do this by:

- improving our understanding of our residents' profile, languages spoken and needs of those living with disabilities to ensure they are not excluded in our communication and engagement
- using a range of communication channels to reach our diverse tenants and leaseholders, including consideration for younger and older residents as well as those whose first language is not English
- delivering involvement activities at different times and locations to ensure as many residents as possible have the access to involvement
- offering a mix of digital and face to face meetings, events and activities
- working with wider council teams, especially the Youth Voice team to develop our approach to effectively involving young people and the Youth Parliament, as well as the community development team and community organisations to support improved involvement of under-represented groups
- ensuring that involved residents are representative of the demography of our residents.

What next?

This strategy will be delivered over a three-year period with our first year focused on laying a good foundation and building on that in the subsequent years. We will develop our action plan with input from the Resident Board to detail what we are delivering in year one and agree a method for evaluating our progress and impact.

Measuring success

We will work with our Resident Board and in accordance with the tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) by the Regulator for Social Housing, we will set annual performance targets for resident involvement. As a result of delivering on our commitments over the life of this strategy, success looks like:

- increased opportunities and support for residents' voice to be heard
- increased number of involved residents representative of the Slough community, influencing service improvements
- evidence of increased resident satisfaction in relation to listening and acting upon their views (TSM)
- Resident Board and other involved residents feeling that their involvement is meaningful and making a difference
- housing staff actively seeking resident involvement on any decision that impacts them
- clear outcomes demonstrating the impact of resident involvement activities
- younger tenants have a voice.

How success will be measured

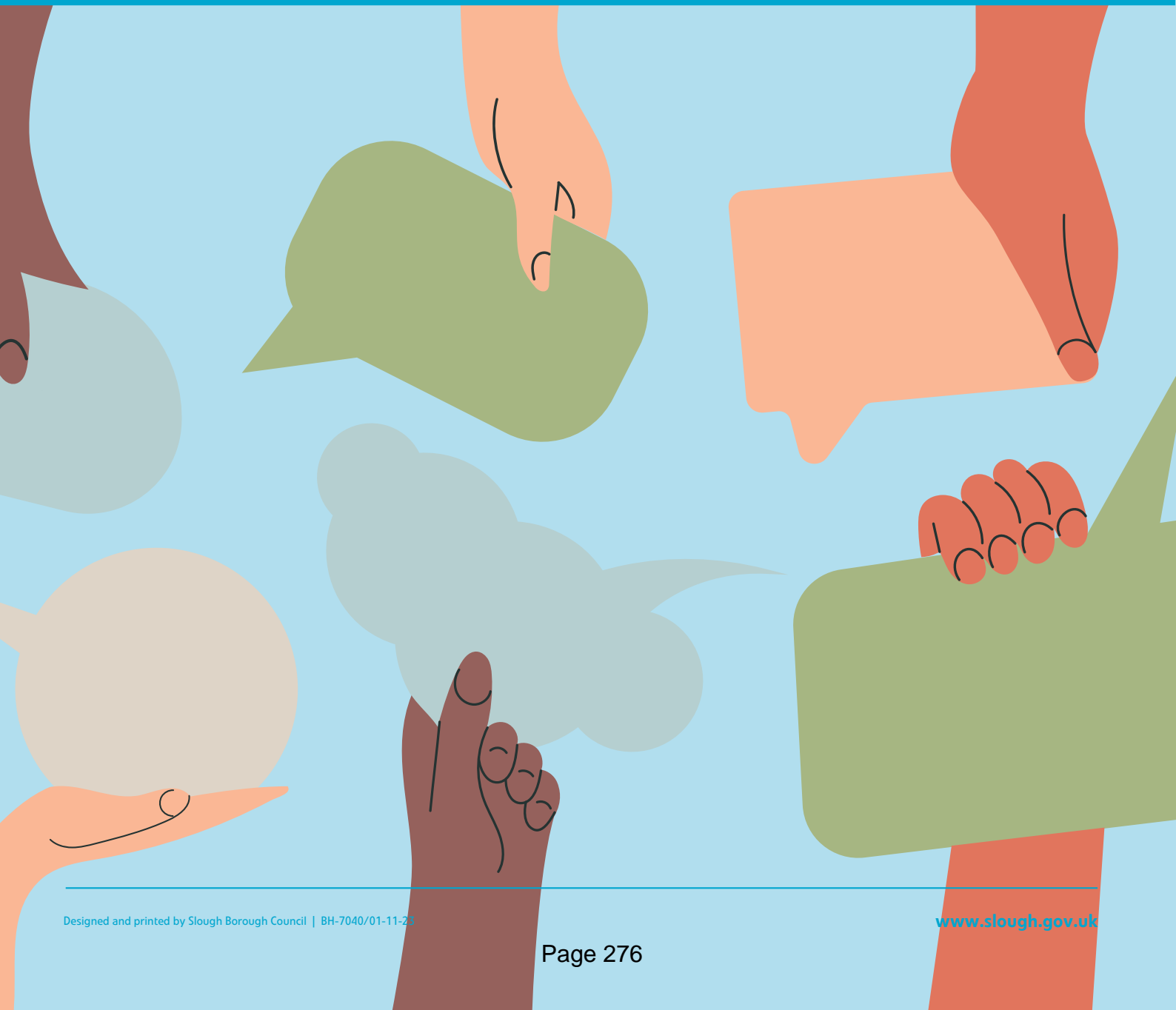
- Key performance indicators including the number of involvement opportunities, number of residents involved and satisfaction with involvement.
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) result relating to resident engagement.
- Annual review of the progress and impact of the Resident Involvement Strategy with staff, Board and other involved residents, using surveys and feedback from engagement activities.
- Appraisal of the corporate culture and performance in relation to resident involvement and to what extent the Board thinks the council takes them seriously at the end of the strategy.

How will we communicate our progress?

- Report progress at every Resident Board meeting.
- Regular internal communication to staff and lead Councillor for housing.
- Provide six monthly updates on progress to Cabinet.
- Provide updates in the Housing Highlights newsletter.
- Annual report to include involvement outcomes, demonstrating accountability to residents.
- Publish progress on the Resident Involvement webpage.



Housing Resident Involvement Strategy 2024-2027



Appendix 2

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: Property & Housing	
Service: Housing Services	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Tosin Adewumi, Resident Engagement Manager	
Date of Assessment: 06/11/23	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Resident Involvement Strategy 2024-27	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The strategy aims to ensure that residents (tenants and leaseholders) are well-informed and are given meaningful opportunities to influence housing services, policies and decisions that impact them. It is also required to be compliant with the new Consumer standards from 2024.</p> <p>Resident Involvement is important and it is about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How we find out what matters to our tenants and leaseholders (listen) and act to ensure safe and well-maintained homes. • Meaningful ways that residents work closely with us to examine and influence the plans, policies and services that affect them. • How we provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of our tenants and leaseholders to reduce barriers to involvement. • Support and assistance for tenant and resident-led activities to influence our plans, policies and services. <p>Resident involvement is about transparency, accountability and resident Influence which leads to service improvement and safe homes for all our tenants and leaseholders. We want to work more closely with them to put things right quickly and put residents at the heart of key housing services' decision-making.</p> <p>The strategy provides a framework for resident involvement with the following five strategic themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a resident involvement culture. 2. Strengthen the Resident Board and resident influence. 3. Range of options for resident involvement. 4. Appropriate resources and support to enable effective involvement. 5. Inclusive and accessible engagement.

	<p>The strategy seeks to embed a resident involvement culture where implementation is not seen as the responsibility of a specific team but everyone's responsibility. It will ensure that all tenants and residents can engage equally using a range of communication channels, providing a variety of involvement options and inclusive engagement to eliminate barriers. All tenants and residents will have the opportunity to engage in ways at the level they want and are comfortable with.</p> <p>As a result of delivering on our commitments over the life of this strategy, success looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased opportunities and support for residents' voices to be heard • increased number of involved residents representative of the Slough community, influencing service improvements • evidence of increased resident satisfaction about listening and acting upon their views • The Resident Board and other involved residents feel that their involvement is meaningful and makes a difference • housing staff actively seeking resident involvement in any decision that impacts them • clear outcomes demonstrating the impact of resident involvement activities • younger tenants have a voice
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 strategy will be overseen by the Resident Board currently comprising eight residents and one independent chair as well as the lead cabinet member for Housing, Cllr Puja. All Slough staff who work in the Housing within the Property and Planning Directorate will deliver this strategy. This includes staff who manage the tenancies and leaseholds, staff who deal with the repairs contract and resident engagement staff. Key partners such as our repairs contractor and others delivering housing services to our tenants and leaseholders will also be involved in bringing the strategy to life. There will be collaboration with the communication and community development teams to effectively deliver the objectives of this strategy.</p>
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example, who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, 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 council staff, all tenants and leaseholders as well as people accessing housing services for many different reasons. It affects the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tenants • Council Leaseholders • James Elliman Homes Tenants • People who are Homeless and accessing advice and support

- Young People who are looked after children and care leavers (the council as a Corporate Parent has agreed to treat them as a protected group).
- All Council's Housing Services staff
- Housing services contractors - repairs, cleaning,
- Council Services provided by the internal DSO; grounds maintenance
- Community organisations
- Community engagement professionals within the council
- Communication and Community Development team

Characteristic	Positive, Negative, Neutral or Unknown Impact	Rationale for Assessment												
Age	Positive	<p>61% of people who live in the council property are of working age as shown in the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0 – 19</td> <td>3324</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 – 65</td> <td>8752</td> </tr> <tr> <td>66 and Over</td> <td>2216</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unknown</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>14304</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Strategy proposes a Housing Resident involvement structure that includes a range of ways to communicate and involve tenants and leaseholders in all age groups. The range of involvement opportunities will have a positive benefit for the adults in the working age group as well as the young and elderly people.</p>	Age Group	No	0 – 19	3324	20 – 65	8752	66 and Over	2216	Unknown	12	Total	14304
Age Group	No													
0 – 19	3324													
20 – 65	8752													
66 and Over	2216													
Unknown	12													
Total	14304													
Disability	Positive	1565 tenants are living with disabilities, accounting for 9% of the 14,304 recorded occupants in Slough socially rented properties. We do not have the data for leaseholders and the Strategy seeks a better understanding of all tenants and leaseholders with disabilities to enable tailored communication/engagement. This will help to reduce barriers to involvement for this group.												
Gender	Positive	The strategy sets out how we will ensure all tenants and leaseholders are given the chance to get involved and directly influence housing services. The opportunities for engagement are made to residents of all genders and support is made available to enable them to take part.												

		<p>Just over 53% of the occupants of the rented council properties are female. Support such as childcare for parents is made available to enable their involvement.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>7669</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>6631</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transgender</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not know</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>14304</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Gender	No	Female	7669	Male	6631	Transgender	1	Not know	3	Total	14304
Gender	No													
Female	7669													
Male	6631													
Transgender	1													
Not know	3													
Total	14304													
Gender Reassignment:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all tenants and leaseholders including those who have undertaken gender reassignment as it aims to strengthen the voice of all residents.												
Marriage and Civil Partnership:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all tenants and leaseholders including married and in civil partnership.												
Pregnancy and maternity:	Positive/	The Strategy will benefit all tenants and leaseholders. The range of communication and options for involvement means that it offers flexibility for those with young families too.												
Race:	Positive	<p>The Strategy will benefit all tenants and leaseholders with inclusive engagement being one of the five themes. Intentional steps will be taken to ensure that no community or groups are excluded. This includes working closely with community organisations that work with underrepresented groups to promote involvement opportunities and to ensure that our communication is accessible.</p> <p>People from different ethnic communities are considered and every effort is made to accommodate cultural and religious needs. The ethnicity data below will be used to monitor the participation of different groups and targeted campaigns when required to improve the representation of involved residents.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnic breakdown of recorded occupants</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British</td> <td>4703</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethnic breakdown of recorded occupants	Number	White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	4703								
Ethnic breakdown of recorded occupants	Number													
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	4703													

			Not Known	3096	
			Pakistani	2356	
			Black African	1064	
			White Background Other	969	
			Asian Background Other	506	
			Indian	399	
			Black Caribbean	375	
			Other Ethnic Group	189	
			White and Black Caribbean	152	
			Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background	117	
			Mixed Multiple Background Other	109	
			Irish	115	
			White and Black African	67	
			Bangladeshi	44	
			White and Asian	39	
			Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2	
			Chinese	2	
			Grand Total	14304	
	Religion and Belief:	Positive	People of any religion and belief who are tenants and leaseholders should benefit from the Strategy.		
	Sexual orientation:	Positive	People of any sexual orientation who are tenants and leaseholders should benefit from the Strategy.		
	Young People who are looked after children:	Positive	Young people who have a background of having been a looked-after child and are now a tenant will be able to benefit from the Strategy.		

4. 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.

Engaging with tenants and residents will help to shape and improve the Council's housing services by further developing our approach to tenant and resident involvement we will make better informed decisions about:

- Budgets and spending efficiencies
- maintaining and improving existing services
- developing new services
- ensuring services are effective and efficient,
- finding long-term solutions to problems and
- improve satisfaction.

The strategy sets out the resident involvement structure showing how we will ensure all tenants and residents are given the chance to have their say and directly influence housing services. The opportunities for involvement are made to all tenants and residents including the groups identified above as an inclusive approach has been embedded. Assistance and support have been factored in to enable groups identified to participate. For example, meetings and events will be held at different times and expenses such as travel and childcare expenses will be covered when required to attend a meeting.

We will ensure we are inclusive and do everything in our control to reduce barriers to involvement for our diverse residents by:

- improving our understanding of our residents' profile, languages spoken and needs of those living with disabilities to ensure they are not excluded in our communication and engagement
- using a range of communication channels to reach our diverse tenants and leaseholders, including consideration for younger and older residents as well as those whose first language is not English
- delivering involvement activities at different times and locations to ensure as many residents as possible have access to involvement
- offering a mix of digital and face-to-face meetings, events and activities
- working with wider council teams, especially the Youth Voice team to develop our approach to effectively involving young people and the Youth Parliament, as well as the community development team and community organisations to support improved involvement of under-represented groups
- ensuring that involved residents are representative of the demography of our residents.

The Resident Engagement will regularly monitor the demographics of engaged residents identify underrepresented groups and target engagement opportunities at these groups.

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>n/a</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>We are a member of the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS) which is a UK-based organisation that works to ensure tenants and leaseholders of social housing have access to advice and support to help them understand their rights and responsibilities. Their engagement standard framework developed from extensive research and input from over 300 members and their residents is one of the sources used. They are known as tenant engagement experts and share best practices. In addition, the impacts identified in 4 and 5 have been assessed using the lived experiences of our Resident Board as well as tenants and leaseholders who participated in the interviews and survey detailed below.</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 consultation with tenants and leaseholders of Slough Borough Council via a survey as well as interviews with our Resident Board made up of eight residents. The survey included questions to help us gain a better understanding of the residents to the strategy using the survey. 52 residents from diverse backgrounds and age groups completed the survey with a range of questions including how they access information about housing services, their experience and how they would like to be involved. Residents wanted a range of involvement opportunities so they could choose what works best for them. This is reflected in our approach to resident involvement detailed in the strategy with a mix of face-to-face and virtual involvement opportunities.</p> <p>We also consulted housing services staff and our repairs contractor.</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>The delivery of the strategy will have a positive impact on community relations as it seeks to be residents-focused. It will ensure that all tenants and leaseholders and people accessing any housing services can have their say and influence service improvement. People will come from different communities but will have our service in coming and hearing their voice is important to us to help understand their experiences of our services and identify where improvements are needed. Training and support will be available to support participation which is empowering. These are positive for community relations.</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>

	There are no identified negatives.
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).</p> <p>The Resident Board will monitor the progress of the strategy and ensure that the diverse needs of tenants and leaseholders are put into consideration. Staff meet with the board every other month.</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 the potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA 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).	

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.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

<p>Name: Tosin Adewumi</p> <p>Signed:(Person completing the EIA)</p> <p>Name:Tony Turnbull.....</p> <p>Signed:(Policy Lead if not same as above)</p> <p>Date:</p>

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2023
I Subject:	Options Appraisal re Procurement of the repairs maintenance and investment (RMI) Contract
Lead Member:	Cllr Kelly – Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes – Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment
Contact Officer:	Chris Stratford – Director of Housing
Ward(s):	ALL
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Options Report by Faithorn Farrell Timms

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the details and consideration given to the various approaches to the re procurement of the Repairs Maintenance and Investment (RMI) contract. The options appraisal goes through in a logical and thorough way the various contract procurement options and then identifies the best methods to be deployed and finally the contract structures which would best suite Slough Borough Councils objectives of providing a significantly different and much improved service offer to its tenants.
- 1.2 The detailed options appraisal report has been produced by a specialist consultancy support practice that has extensive knowledge of Repair Maintenance and investment contract procurement with a wide and relevant knowledge of the marketplace for procuring such contracts. They have advised several major local authorities and Registered Provider organisations on the placement of such contracts following successful procurement exercises. They therefore provide a professional independent view of the process and market considerations.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve a short extension period of 4 months from December 2024 to 31 March 2025 to the current provider.
- Approve a soft market testing exercise to inform the procurement methodology for the future procurement of services.

- Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport, Housing, Highways, the Environment and Environmental Services, to determine the procurement route to secure best value and commence procurement, noting that a future report will be brought back to Cabinet in November 2024 to award any contracts.

Reason For Recommendations

The Council needs to procure a new Repairs and Maintenance Service to ensure improvements to the overall service offer delivering a more responsive and customer orientated services which should achieve significantly improved customer satisfaction. The officers have reviewed and carefully considered the detailed Options Report and have subsequently carefully reviewed the options for re procurement summarised in Options section of this report and fully support the recommendations made by the consultant for the reasons identified.

Commissioner Review

The commissioners are content with the recommendations in this report.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The current Strategic Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract was procured between 2016 and 2017. Following this process Osbournes were appointed as the preferred provider with an initial seven-year period which expires 1 December 2024 with the option to extend the contract for a period of up to three years. The Council needs to decide on future delivery of these services.

Options Considered

The Options report contains the detailed options which have been identified and these are covered in some detail within section 7 of the options report. In summary however officers have considered the following primary options.

Option1

Recommend a further three-year extension of the current contract. This is **not recommended** given the current operational shortcomings in respect of customer satisfaction levels based on our latest tenant and leaseholder survey feedback. General performance levels around outstanding work in progress jobs, complaints received, and overall, the structure of the contract which no longer reflects the priorities of the service in terms of the delivery customer contact through a specialist contact centre using contractor resources and cleaning and estate services which could be potentially provided through an in-house estate warden service.

Option 2

Procure a single integrated contract. This is **not recommended** because this type of procurement given the overall anticipated marketplace for such contracts would still expose the Council to unreasonable service failure risk through employing a large single contractor across the Slough Borough area and all areas of maintenance and investment activity.

Option 3

Procurement of a single integrated maintenance and investment contract but separately procuring specialist works for compliance activity such as water management, Gas, and electrical compliance. This is **not recommended** as it still leaves the main single contract as a potential significant operating risk around the utilisation of a single large contractor.

Option 4

Procurement based on a more traditional multi contract approach with selective internalisation of customer service. This would include the direct control by the housing service of customer call centre activities which would be aligned with the Councils corporate approach to customer contact. Cleaning services under current contract arrangements does not represent the more comprehensive service approach which would also combine more general estate management allowing the formation of a new estate warden service managed potentially directly by the housing service.

There is also need for a more balanced approach to repair and investment to not only spread risk and operational profit across more capital planned works and repair works thus reducing more costly revenue repairs (**good practice suggest a split of 70% capital planned works against 30% repair revenue costs**) but also further reduce risk across more than one contract placement to include more than one contract to give greater flexibility around contract management and operational outputs which meet contract and customer expectations. This option therefore is the **recommended option**, subject to a soft market testing process to ensure the market will respond positively to a procurement. It is recommended that decisions on the procurement methodology is delegated to the Executive Director, with proposals for any insourcing and award of contracts being reported to Cabinet for a decision in 2024.

Background

2.2 The Council needs to consider its position now to determine whether it wishes to extend the existing contract to allow sufficient procurement time should the Council determine it does not wish to extend for a further period of up to three years. It is considered that a short extension to 31 March 2025 is required to ensure sufficient time to reprocur the services and have an effective transition. There is also an added benefit that the new contract will be aligned with the Council's new financial year.

2.3 The primary reasons therefore to conclude that a long-term extension of contract is not appropriate is rooted in given performance of the contractor, the need to urgently review the content of key elements of the contract such as cleaning, and customer service centre responses and the need to achieve a significant improvement in overall customer satisfaction. This in turn will improve the overall service offer by way of having potentially more direct control of key elements of the housing services such as the call centre management, and subsequently the client project management capacity.

Timetable to Reprocur New Contract.

Assuming that the soft market testing process leads to a new procurement process for a multi-contract approach, the following timescale is proposed.

- Cabinet Decision (short term extension and agree soft market testing) – December 23
- Issue prior information notice (P.I.N.) to engage market – December 23
- Soft market testing /early engagement – January 2023 to March 2024
- Publish Contract Notice – April 24
- Issue Tender – July 24
- Tender Return – August 24
- Issue Tender Report – October 24
- Standstill expires – December 24
- Contract preparation – December 24 to January 2025
- Mobilisation –January to March 25
- Go Live – 1st April 2025

Critical to any major procurement exercise such as this one would be, is comprehensive stakeholder engagement, to secure support and input to the ultimate model adopted. The programme above, from the cabinet approval decision, provides up to three months for such engagement.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial Implications.

3.1.1 Members are asked to note that the re procurement of a new repairs maintenance and investment contract is a substantial commitment by the council in providing excellent service. Such a contract has major financial implications and of course in many ways carries significant influence in the way tenants view the overall service standards being achieved across the housing service. In financial terms during 2023/24 it is estimated that £11.8m will be spent on Repairs and Maintenance rising to £13.34m in 2024/25. Similarly, the investment budget for planned capital improvements is £11.5m in 2023/24 and £8.79m in 24/25.

3.1.2 The initial financial impacts of reprocurring the contract is identified within the Options report, but officers have also identified additional financial impacts for consideration by Cabinet, these initial cost estimates will be further refined and requested for inclusion within the approved HRA budget to be considered by Cabinet in February 2024 and included in the revised HRA Business Plan in February 2024.

3.1.3 It is not proposed that this contract would be utilised to provide maintenance and planned works across the General Fund as the preferred provider would specialise in the provision of services to residential assets as opposed to a combination of both. This should ensure best value for the cost base associated with council owned residential stock

as corporate building and services will include more complex service elements associated with larger facilities such as civic buildings or specialist sports facilities. It is also likely that contract terms are significantly different in relation to the current dates for renewing the RMI housing requirements and the General fund needs. Finally, there are the further administrative complexities of providing accounting services associated with the ring fence for the HRA investment and the use of HRA funding potentially ahead of re charging the General fund for works completed. Costs therefore are based on renewing the HRA contract only and include.

Decommissioning costs current contract	£150,000 (One off cost)
Consultancy Support Procurement	£164,025 (One off cost)
Estimated revised Client costs	£571,160
(These are new Ongoing potential costs)	
Estimated re Procurement costs	£180,000 (One off costs)
Total <u>£1,066,185</u>	

The decommission costs of £150,000, Consultancy support £164,025 and re-Procurement costs of £180,000 will be provided for in the 2024/25 budget while the new Client Management costs if applicable will be provided for in the 2025/26 budget to be considered by Cabinet in February see recommendations.

3.1.3 In addition to these early estimated costs there may be further costs expected for potential TUPE obligations by potentially internalising the cleaning service and customer service facilities and new costs associated with establishing a new Estate caretaking/ warden service from 2025/26 clearly it will be essential to factor into these options and it is intended to complete a pre determination of these implications as part of the full and necessary options appraisal which will be completed this will allow officers to fully understand such costs the necessary consultation arrangements associated with any subsequent TUPE obligations.

Some one-off preparation costs to establish these services might be expected in 2024/25 but the detailed report on the proposals to establish these service offers will identify these costs. Clearly the final structure of the new contract will emerge after the soft market testing exercise so a report detailing any detailed proposals and associated costs will follow no later than September 2024.

Finally, there will of course be increased costs associated with the new contract and these are obviously difficult to estimate as this is subject to the fully completed re tendering process and will be reported to Cabinet as part of the process seeking Cabinet approval to the final procurement outcome.

The increased cost assumptions are based on the approach to create more client project team capacity, and the new approach to subject to market testing introduce a more traditional multi contract approach to reduce exposure to a single contract performance failure. Finally taking account of the latest version of the Schedule of Rates applied through the National Federation will inevitably result in increased cost. Again, the final procurement exercise will allow for the introduction of any amended contract cost increase

within the 2025/26 HRA budget. The overall contract will need to demonstrate adherence to best value despite any increased costs.

3.2 *Legal implications*

3.2.1 The legal requirements for any re procurement of a major contract such as this are complex. The Council must ensure compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and its own contract procedure rules. Housing officers will work closely with procurement and legal colleagues throughout the procurement process and any future contract negotiation. This will inform decisions on the best procurement method to use to ensure an adequate level of competition alongside the ability to negotiate with selected providers. Consideration will also need to be given to options such as setting up a framework or calling off existing frameworks. Decisions on the procurement methodology will be informed by the need to achieve best value and options to deliver social value by utilising small and medium sized enterprises, including local providers.

3.2.2 TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings) considerations must be considered both in terms of the existing contractors' staff moving to a new contractor or transferring to the Council as part of an insourcing arrangement.

3.3 *Risk management implications*

3.3.1 The Options report has provided a logical well thought out process to the delivery of a new contract and in section 13 Appendix A of the report runs through the various options and have provided a RAG rated description for each option with respective advantages and disadvantages which covers appropriate risk factors. These risks will be added to the directorate risk register and will be managed aggressively by improved Officer Client Project management resources being secured.

3.3.2 The risk process can then be managed by more direct intervention by specialist Contract Surveyors for key elements of the maintenance and investment priorities agreed from year to year. Further the final introduction of effective IT systems such as (CURA) to monitor risks and deliver effective automated reporting and capture of key contract performance data will significantly improve overall risk management.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 The contract documentation will set out the Councils expectation around the primary issues of conducting the new contract from an environmental and climate change perspective. This will include the use of materials, products, recycling expectations, vehicles, and any appropriate targets and KPI performance issues to be deployed to measure compliance and contract requirements.

3.5 *Equality implications*

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.

Inclusive and accessible engagement is one of the five themes of the Resident Engagement Strategy which seeks to reduce barriers to involvement for our diverse residents improve involvement of under-represented groups within Slough. There will be a full equality impact assessment completed as part of the procurement documentations for bidders to note and comply with.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 The report has highlighted some potential TUPE arrangements that may apply by internalising services areas presently included within the current contract. These will be assessed in detail as part of securing the final contract structure. Other work force issues relate to the extension of the client-side project management capacity and the Options report indicates the potential implications in this respect. Finally, there may be a requirement for additional staff training as required to implement and work with a new contract arrangement.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 It is intended that the present Offices at Hawker House will no longer be required and can be returned to the landlord once the existing service is ended. The associated cost is included in the decommissioning the building in section 3.

4. Background Papers

None

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Delivery of Strategic Repairs, Maintenance and Investment Services - Options Appraisal

On behalf of

Slough Borough Council

Chris Stratford: Director of Housing

Prepared by

Lee Maskell

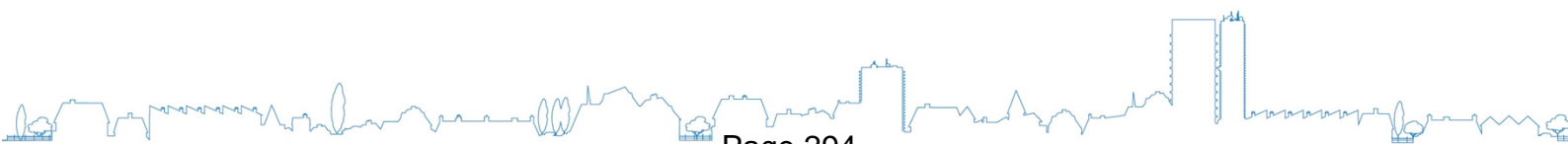
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Project No: T1-7230

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1 Executive Summary



Slough Borough Council commissioned Faithorn Farrell Timms (FFT) to provide independent and impartial procurement advice and produce a detailed Options Appraisal pertaining to the delivery mechanisms for the future provision of its asset management services Contract/s. FFT were appointed on 21 June 2023 under Purchase Order: 8079051.

The purpose of this Executive Summary is to provide a high-level synopsis of the contents of this Options Appraisal and to set out the preferred option in relation to how Slough Borough Council (SBC) will deliver their key services over the coming years.

This report sets out all the stages undertaken in the Options Appraisal process and explains the rationale for the preferred option set out in this section of the report. The preferred option for the delivery of the arrangement/s are as set out under the bullet points below. This has been impacted by the timeline for procurement available to SBC, which is no more than fifteen months, (although it does give due time for stakeholder engagement, see section 10), should a decision be made at the Council Cabinet meeting in December 2023, to not extend the current contract beyond its Expiry Date of December 2024.

As a result, FFT are recommending the following option for a more traditional procurement, based upon multiple individual contracts, drawing together key individual workstreams, where there is delivery benefit to do so, as well as to streamline contract management. In addition to address planned capital works, it is recommended that a Framework is created, based upon Lots for individual Workstreams. Breaking these down into smaller values will enable the local supply chain and specialists to apply, and subject to rigorous due diligence, to be successful. The contracts and the Framework would be procured via a two stage Restricted Procedure in each case.

FFT see a split of the current contract into the following delivery models to be procured simultaneously:

- Responsive repairs, void refurbishment services, part planned maintenance
- Cleaning services (or the option to create a DLO, see section 7.8)
- Compliance services, with separate contracts for
 - Heating management services (domestic and commercial), including renewables.
 - Water hygiene services and management
 - Lift management services
 - Specialist remedial works
 - Asbestos management services
- Capital Works framework, comprising individual Lots for:
 - Roofing
 - Windows & Doors
 - Cyclical Decorations
 - Structural Works
 - External Works & Drainage
 - Kitchens & Bathrooms

 - Retrofit / Carbon reduction.

We considered at section 7.4 the option to include capital planned works with the responsive repair's element. However, for the reasons stated there, as well as the fact that a separate



option for a Capital Works Framework would be attractive in securing a local supply chain, our recommendation is as stated above and constitutes a hybrid model.

It is considered essential that SBC test the model of delivery put forward above and thus it is recommended that a Soft Market Test event is undertaken with the market, via the issue of a Prior Information Notice (P.I.N.), in advance of the final decision to procure new services.

In terms of the price model, all of the options set out under section 7 of this report could fit with the delivery model set out above.

It is also recommended that the call centre is brought back in house to align with the corporate facility already in place.

In terms of the Form of Contract, this will depend to an extent on the selected delivery model. However the current JCT MTC incorporates a collaborative element to it, thus it is recommended that SBC consider a partnering form of contract such as TPC 2005 (amended), or the ~Term Alliancing Contract, TAC-1. For the Framework a recommendation for the use of FAC-1 is made, as the overarching contract, with the option for individual TAC-1, or JCT contracts beneath that, appropriate for specific programmes of work

2 Introduction and background

SBC procured the Strategic Repairs, Maintenance and Investment Services contract between 2016 and 2017, with the successful Service Provider, Osborne Property Services Ltd (OPSL), entering into contract on 15 June 2017. The contract commenced specifically on the Service Transfer Date, this being 01 December 2017. The delivery model for the Contract, included a hybrid of Schedule of Rates (NHF 6.3) for repairs and void refurbishment work, and basket and composite rates for all

planned maintenance workstreams, including heating and electrical plant and equipment replacement. The cleaning element of the contract was priced and managed via a combination of property blocks / archetypes with frequencies for the services. The Contract term was for an initial seven-year period (Expiry Date), but with the option for SBC to extend for a period up to three further years in total, in durations of time as they stipulated. The maximum contract period is ten years, should the decision to extend be exercised.

OPSL were appointed to deliver the service across SBC's entire housing property portfolio in Slough. The contract reaches its Expiry Date on 01 December 2024 (seven years) and thus SBC, in consideration of the procurement time required to re-procure such a strategic contract, need to consider their position, to extend or not, by the autumn of 2023. This contract, due to its value is subject to the Public Contracts Regulations (2015).

In order to explore the options available, SBC appointed Faithorn Farrell Timms LLP (FFT), to support them to develop an Options Appraisal in advance of any decision to run a full procurement. The purpose of this report is therefore to explore and set out the various Options available to SBC moving forward.

In terms of the brief for the Options Appraisal, the following was agreed between SBC and FFT.

- To undertake a detailed appraisal of the options available, with regard to all the workstreams delivered by OPSL currently.
- To consider all the possible delivery models (e.g., Wholly Owned Subsidiary, Joint Ventures, Traditional outsourced partnering Contracts, mixed economy, a DPS, etc) and provide a commentary around the pros and cons of each.
- To look at all the possible Contracts that could be used and provide a commentary around the pros and cons of each.
- To look at all the possible pricing models and provide a commentary around the pros and cons of each.
- To provide an initial draft report for 04 August 2023.
- To provide an indicative timeline to deliver an implement a new arrangement.

Due to the various types of Contracts that are used in the sector to deliver repairs and voids services, as well as compliance, planned maintenance and cleaning, the name of the party

delivering the Contract can differ from Contractor to Service Provider. The current Contract is a JCT MTC 2011 (with amendments), which refers to the Service Partner (amended term). The TPC 2005 (Amended 2008) on the other hand refers to Service Providers, while the TAC-1 refers to the Provider as examples. This report therefore refers to Contractor, Service Provider and Provider, but these all relate to the same entity.

3 The Contract

As stated, the contract is a JCT Measured Term Contract 2011, with amendments. There is a collaborative intent within the amended provisions, such that the contractor terminology has

been changed to "Service Partner". Features of partnering contracts have been included, such as KDI Performance Measures, a Risk Register mechanism, and a process for Annual Review. However, FFT were informed that these have never taken place.

It is also to be noted that although KDI performance is reported on monthly, through the Operational Management Board (OMB), it generally relates to responsive repairs and void refurbishment. Separate KDI's have not been recorded since the contract commencement for cleaning services, planned maintenance, nor gas servicing, breakdowns and repairs.

The contract at clause 7.1 (Break Provision), is heavily amended and gives the right to SBC to reduce the term of the contract by giving the Service Partner 13 weeks' notice but not less than 36 months from the commencement of the contract. However, should SBC exercise this right then under clause 7.4, whether in respect of the entire contract or part thereof, they are required to pay to the Service Partner compensation in respect of their losses under clause 7.4.1 (i & ii). For year 6 of the contract this is tabled at £1,500,000.00. SBC need to consider this point within their decisions.

It would also appear that the contract at 7.1 in its amendments, removed the right for the Service Partner to reduce the contract term, which is contrary to general partnering principles.

Clause 2.1/A.3 gives control to SBC solely, to extend the contract beyond the Expiry Date and for any period they choose up to a maximum of three further years, which would reach the maximum ten-year duration. SBC would need to notify OPSL of this within six months of the term and for which they cannot refuse any such extension to the contract in this respect.

Within the sub clause (2.1/A.1.3) SBC are tasked with undertaking a full review of the cost model and to do so by 31 March 2020, or earlier. We are not aware whether this exercise was undertaken.

For clarity the contract includes the following Workstreams:

- Responsive Repairs
- Void refurbishment
- Kitchens and Bathrooms replacement
- Windows and Doors renewals
- Roofing works
- Cyclical Painting & Decorating

- Electrical and Heating Services
- Asbestos Services
- Cleaning Services
- Surveys and Inspections

These cover a wide sphere of services, from works, to FM, to compliance, as well as consultancy. The Options Appraisal will review the benefits of combining or separating workstreams to better support the delivery of services to SBC's residents.

4 Key Considerations for Slough Borough Council

4.1 Introductions



To support the Options Appraisal process, we believed it prudent to look at the key requirements of SBC moving forward and any key areas that may benefit from review, as these could have an influence on the preferred option.

4.2 High Levels of Customer Service

A fundamental driver is the desire to increase customer satisfaction. Whilst value for money is also key for SBC, in many respects high levels of customer service and quality are of equal if not greater significance than price. This is especially pertinent in relation to the statistics reviewed, and where they are for the existing contract. Value for money is not about looking at price in isolation from quality. This is particularly relevant in the approach to any future tender evaluation and reiterates the importance of stakeholder engagement to ensure the contracts procured deliver upon their expectations. FFT have met with SBC technical officers, Anita Jan and Tosin Adewumi, both within the Localities Participation Team, who have specific responsibility for resident engagement and improving satisfaction levels. Discussion took place regarding early engagement for residents as a part of the procurement group, building a new contract to be procured.

4.3 Call Handling & Diagnosis

The call handling function is key to the successful delivery of any repairs, voids, and compliance contract. This function is currently delivered by the incumbent contractor, with the statistics showing they have not performed well generally over 2022 / 23. It is acknowledged that such functions can suffer from a high staff turnover level, this being evidenced in the monthly OMB minutes, as well as a lack of staff training as a result.

It could be that SBC, as part of their analysis of the existing contract and assessing aspirations for a new one, consider bringing the call centre function in-house. This could align with the council's corporate call centre already in place, bringing forth certain synergies and economies of scale.

FFT is aware that many clients consider that retention of the call handling in-house is a key element of service delivery, but likewise we also recognise that passing the call handling to the contractor can remove the blame culture in terms of whether the diagnostics process

is adversely affecting delivery. Both solutions work if there is good communication, learning from issues and trust between client and contractor. Whichever model is ultimately chosen we do consider it essential for the call handling function to be well resourced, all staff to be given regular training, to include for a "duty surveyor" to be available in the call centre to provide advice and support in triaging more difficult calls, and for repairs schedulers to be co-located with the call handling team. In our experience a well-resourced structure, properly invested in will reap significant benefits.

4.4 Tender Documents

The current documentation on review, is of significant length and complexity. Although the contract is a JCT MTC 2011, it has been heavily amended to reflect collaborative principles. A new contract would benefit from a more streamlined set of documents and in our opinion the consideration of using a partnering form of contract, removing the need to amend a non-collaborative form. SBC have included robust requirements within the existing documents;

however any new procurement process needs to look at these in detail.

4.5 Price/Delivery Model

The current model operates on a mixture of schedule of rates (NHF V. 6.3), basket / composite rates and archetypes. FFT would expect as part of the re-procurement process to workshop key aspects such as this, to better understand how these pricing and payment models have worked over the preceding six years, as well as what moving forward would best serve SBC. Planned maintenance has been a significant part of this current contract, with OPSL delivering £6.5 million in 2021/22, and a forecast to deliver £10.5 million in 2022/23. If spend through a new contract, and if it was to include elements of retrofit, was to run at similar levels, or increase, then a more innovative form of pricing should be considered. A target cost model would be one such approach (see later in the report), and which we are delivering with LB Haringey.

4.6 Social Value

The key for SBC and their residents is the delivery of a good repairs and component replacement service that results in high levels of customer satisfaction. Although this is arguably the most important aspect of social value, SBC do need to consider this in a wider context as part of any new procurement. Just in the procurement evaluation process itself social value generally attracts between 5% and 15% of the quality score, (analysis of 13 local authorities).

4.7 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

It may be that OPSL currently employ a number of operatives who have transferred from service providers and as such remain on terms and conditions that include a LGPS pension. Any future arrangement would need to take this into account as the operatives in question would have the opportunity to transfer again, with potential implications associated with the liabilities around the LGPS terms and conditions.

5 Options available to Slough Borough Council

5.1 Introduction

In order to ensure all the options available to SBC are considered and to make sure the recommended solution best meets the long-term requirements of the council, the following options have been considered as part of this appraisal:

- Re-procurement of existing arrangements
- Multiple Individual Single Contracts
- Framework
- Single integrated Contracts
- Dynamic Purchasing System
- Joint procurements/shared services
- In-House Capability
- Joint Venture
- Wholly Owned Subsidiary
- Mixed Economy – a combination of some of the above options

- Full range of pricing options considered, including Price Per Property / Price Per Void, Schedule of Rates, Open Book, Average Job Value, Agreed Maximum Price or Target Price

FFT has set out the service delivery options and a commentary on the advantages and disadvantages and risk with each at **Appendix A** for further information.

5.2 Extend existing arrangements

One option available to SBC would be to extend the existing contract arrangement with the current provider, in accordance with the contract, extending it beyond the Expiry Date, by up to a maximum of three years. However in reality, in consideration of the performance of the Service Partner, and the opinion of the council this is not a feasible option and re-procurement is necessary.

5.3 Re-procurement of existing arrangements

This approach offers familiarity to SBC and its technical officers in so far as one may re-procure the current arrangement of a single integrated contract approach and use the experience of it to amend the Contract itself to improve delivery, drive value and improve service and customer satisfaction. However, it has been evidenced that the current model has not delivered to the standards required by SBC and thus there may be appetite to consider breaking the current workstreams down into separate contracts.

5.4 Multiple Individual Single Contracts

This approach would potentially allow greater flexibility and control for SBC and is likely to encourage more specialist firms to tender for the Contracts agreed upon. It should be noted that due to the concentrated nature of SBC's stock it is unlikely that one would split.

the Contract by geographical lots. The risk of having only one Contractor is mitigated as risks are spread across a range of contractors and would allow the council to utilise contractors' expertise in their field. It is also possible that smaller Providers may have reduced overheads and preliminaries that could drive other efficiencies. The key benefits will be the ability for SBC to mitigate the risk of poor service delivery and insolvency and having all eggs in one basket, with it putting a greater focus on specific services and contracts. It should also engage the local supply chain more positively. This is different to the current position where the existing contact does not report individually on KPI's across the various workstreams. More direct management from individual contracts should achieve a more focused delivery, with the result being improved customer satisfaction. The disadvantage is that SBC would have to manage multiple Contractors which could be resource heavy. It is also key to note that there are only so many Contractors who could deliver responsive repairs on a Contract of this size and nature.

The multiple contracts established, in this model option, would need to mitigate against the need for significant client coordination and internal resources to manage them. Incorporating several IT interfaces in operation, guarding against a loss of synergy across workstreams, with potential duplication of works, are all points to be considered. One would need to ensure contract values were still large enough to incentivise enough contractors to bid for the opportunities and innovate and invest. Splitting the current contract into multiples in a future procurement, may also make for more complex TUPE issues. Should this be a preferred option for SBC there are further aspects that would need consideration in terms of council structure

and management.

FFT see a potential split of the current contract into the following individual delivery models:

- Responsive repairs, void refurbishment services, part planned
- Cleaning services (or the option to create a DLO, see section 7.8)
- Compliance services, with separate contracts for
 - Heating management services (domestic and commercial), including renewables.
 - Water hygiene services and management
 - Lift management services
 - Specialist remedial works
 - Asbestos management services

Such a proposed split enables building fabric to be considered by multiple contractors from a responsive and planned perspective, enabling flexibility in delivery and management of the asset. It is expected that the planned maintenance element of the repairs contract would only represent a small percentage of the total capital works budget, with the majority being delivered through a framework (see later). One could consider the option to separate out planned maintenance works entirely into a further contract, and this does have merit in the ability to access a wider supply chain. However, it is the opinion of FFT that incorporating an element of the planned works within the responsive repairs contract, as well as creating a Framework for capital works, provides the best opportunity to SBC to secure variety of specialist delivery and value for money.

The proposal identified also achieves a greater focus on key compliance services in general, with the use of specialists and with a reduced need for sub-contracting. In separating cleaning services out, which are an FM function, to be delivered via a contract or as a DLO, it also mirrors how the council is structured in terms of estates and property functions. FFT consider that this option has distinct merits for SBC.

One consideration to be borne in mind in contracting with a wider supply chain of smaller providers is the need to ensure significant due diligence is undertaken throughout the procurement process and into contract management. This should cover financial sustainability and experience. Although one cannot prescribe a financial size of contractor, ones with a turnover of between £30 and £50 million would meet expectations.

We referenced above the fact that in moving to a multiple integrated contract model, SBC may need to consider the need to increase their internal resources to ensure effective client management. We provide the table below, as an example of potential costs, that may need to be considered in adopting such a change in delivery. It is assumed for this example that the Head of Service is in place.

Resource	Number	Salary	Sub total	Overhead	Total
Senior Contract Manager	1	£ 65,000.00	£ 65,000.00	31%	£ 85,150.00



Managing Surveyor	1	£ 55,000.00	£ 55,000.00	31%	£ 72,050.00
Technical Surveyor	5	£ 48,000.00	£ 240,000.00	31%	£ 314,400.00
Clerk of Works	2	£ 38,000.00	£ 76,000.00	31%	£99,560.00
Administration	1	Included in overhead	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL					£ 571,160.00

5.5 Framework

As considered in section 7.4 utilising a multiple individual contract model offers many opportunities for SBC. This can also apply to managing the planned capital works when one wishes to separate that from a responsive repair’s delivery model. To deliver a better service via more specialist contractors one would separate the workstreams. This would not only secure more providers and mitigate the risk of failure through insolvency, but it would also reduce contract values, enabling the local supply chain more opportunity to bid. However, to make such a model manageable we propose the use of a Framework for the majority of the planned works, with the workstreams being Lotted within that. This would enable a

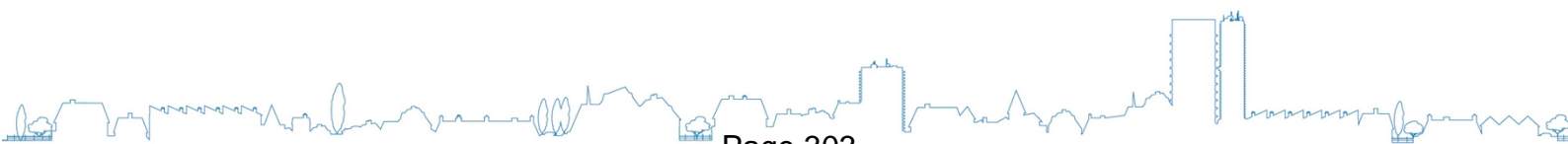
structured process, comprising the options for direct award and mini competition, and the ability to have two or more contractors on each Lot; thereby providing continued competition, security and resource. We have identified the following workstreams for the Framework.

- Capital Works framework, comprising individual Lots for:
 - Roofing
 - Windows & Doors
 - Cyclical Decorations
 - Structural Works
 - External Works & Drainage
 - Kitchens & Bathrooms
 - Retrofit / Carbon reduction.

5.6 Single Integrated Contract

This is the contract format that SBC have operated for the last six years, the existing arrangement (clause 7.3). It should have provided the advantage of unified and co-ordinated work streams with the opportunity for cost savings in delivery and improved customer satisfaction. Contract management should have also been more streamlined with a single provider to manage. The breadth of the contract scope and the management

of it however does not appear to have been consistent. Hence why there appears to have been greater visibility and control across responsive repairs and void refurbishment, and less in areas such as cleaning and planned maintenance.



The size of a single contract would make it attractive and should lead to more competitive bids from contractors. It is however inevitable that a main contractor would subcontract work elements and charge a management fee (within the tendered sum) to manage the supply chain put in place. Investment in IT systems, social value and training should also be more achievable with a larger value contract.

It does mean that there is a high risk if there are any issues around service failure or insolvency, SBC would have limited options to modify the delivery model. If the contract works well, it can have significant benefits, however, as in the current position with OPSL, if the service or relationship fails it can create serious group wide consequences, with the need for early contract termination. The biggest risk for SBC with this approach is that they will have "all their eggs in one basket", so a second tier of support providers could be a logical solution via a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for example, yet this would somewhat dilute the potential merits of a single provider.

5.7 Dynamic Purchasing System

Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) are certainly gaining traction in the market, and they have their part to play with the delivery of asset management Contracts and as a Practice we have recently set these up for several of our clients. We commonly see them used to support a DLO or a main Service Provider in the form of back up support. SBC would also need to ensure that any DPS operated a complete service and did not merely act as an

approved list of suppliers that a client could choose from. The issue with setting up one's own DPS, is the level of management associated with this, as Providers can join the DPS at any stage if they meet the minimum requirements. The big advantage of a DPS is that it should encourage local SMEs to apply who should be capable of providing a responsive service to SBC. It does not however guarantee longevity in workload unless the council issued calls for competition to create long terms arrangements with providers on the DPS; which in itself would undermine the main contract in place.

Whilst a DPS has many advantages as a support framework, it is not appropriate as the primary delivery model for a strategic repairs and maintenance services contract for a client the size of SBC. FFT would not recommend this approach.

5.8 Joint Procurements/Shared Service

There may be benefits in procuring with another contracting authority to make contracts more attractive to gain economies and strengthen management. This approach is used to establish a joint Framework or Contract. There should be procurement economies by sharing costs and contract management economies through a streamlined process. There needs to be similarities of approach of the partners to ensure a common purpose. Different time scales and priorities may impact on the speed of procurement. FFT's experience is that the necessity to meet the requirements of more than one client tends to dilute the focus. Furthermore, our experience is that it is uncommon that two Contracting.

Authorities with similar requirements are going to the market at the same time and as such FFT have not been involved with a single joint procurement or shared service over the last ten years.

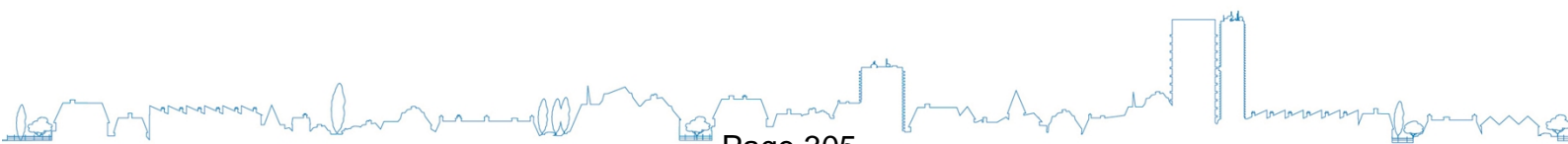
In terms of a Shared Service without a Joint Procurement, it is possible that SBC could share a service with another Contracting Authority, thereby negating the need to procure. The main drivers are to improve efficiency and save costs through pooling resources and/or aggregating demand. For some models there may also be an opportunity to create new revenue streams, for example, by selling HR services to other public or private sector bodies. Creating or using a centralised service provider can also concentrate expertise and so deliver higher quality services to customers. Depending on the structure, the opportunity to save VAT may also be available. There are various ways in which a Shared Service can be set up and if this is a realistic option for SBC then these should be explored further with the support of legal advice.

There are however a number of key areas that would require further consideration and legal support, which include but are not limited to advice around Teckal, which relates to the 1999 judgment of Teckal (C-107/98) whereby the ECJ established an exemption from public procurement for the award of contracts by a public authority to a separate entity, provided certain requirements were met, such as the level of work SBC would be permitted to deliver through the shared service and what the structure would actually look like. The subject of a Shared Service or Cost Share Group can be complicated so legal advice would be required, which would also come with an implication in terms of timescales.

5.9 In-House Capability (DLO)

An In-House Capability, which is more commonly known as a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) in general terms has economic benefits through VAT savings on staff costs and means the service can be directly managed, which should in theory mean the council would have better control of the operatives and be able to drive up customer satisfaction. This could lead to opportunities for early innovation and avoid the risk of the failure of an external contractor. It can provide a team that is entirely focused on delivering services for SBC, leading to customer service benefits. The In-House Capability can be part of the service delivery, targeted at problem areas or specific services, working alongside an external contractor delivery or indeed provide full delivery. The advantage for a DLO, is that residents commonly buy into the model, as they see the service being delivered by SBC and not an external Contractor. It is however important to note that the current workforce would in the main transfer back into the council so any issues with the current workforce would remain.

However, there are significant costs and risks to setting up an In-House Capability and places all the risks with SBC. Set up costs of between £750k and £1 million are not unreasonable to expect as a starting point. The nature of public sector employment arrangements and salaries, leave and sickness arrangements, mean that generally unit wage levels are higher than private sector peers and this can offset the VAT gains. Other Registered Providers have been reluctant to establish an In-House Capability from scratch due to the investment required in the initial set up and the skills required to manage it, particularly when there is an established contractor in place. As well as taking on all the risks, SBC would also need to be mindful of their needing to be a change in mindset within their own organisation, as current staff may have limited knowledge or experience of how a DLO operates, which could result in the need to recruit or train. Furthermore, external providers are used to working in a commercial environment and they will manage a Contract to reflect their tendered rates and margins, and this should result in efficiencies being seen about operative productivity and removing any fat from the process. If SBC were to create a DLO they would need to be mindful of managing the balance between increased customer expectations and a financially



viable service for the delivery of repairs and maintenance.

An In-House Capability requires different skills to manage the service – blue collar workers'; fleet management; materials purchase and will also require additional management for finances, IT and materials and plant. There will also be an initial TUPE issue as operatives transfer from a current contractor, and SBC will be responsible for managing this process, where previously it would have been dealt with by the HR departments of the provider partners. There will be a requirement to formally procure and manage subcontracts for skills and materials that the In-House Capability does not directly have. However, SBC is likely to have notable buying power in the market to attract a good pool of sub-contractors and suppliers and it is likely to be an opportunity for small local providers. Also, as a 'contractor' with a single client, it is harder for an In-House Capability to deal with peaks and troughs of work as it does not have the option to balance work across clients and thus this will require careful management and the potential use of agency staff to plug gaps that occur due to sickness and annual leave.

In terms of the effectiveness of existing DLO's, FFT currently work with several clients who have an in-house DLO to deliver their repairs and voids contracts mainly. One of our clients, who we would class as a mid-size Contracting Authority, successfully delivers their repairs service using a DLO, but struggles to deliver planned works, larger voids, and complex repairs in-house and as such they use external contractors to support their DLO with the larger more complicated repairs and voids. It is extremely likely therefore that a DLO could not deliver all services for SBC and a mixed economy, with a separately procured planned maintenance function would be necessary.

Two other larger clients with significant property numbers have a large DLO, one does not pick up planned works and the other picks up the more straight forward planned works such as new kitchen and bathrooms. Both struggle to deliver larger complex repairs and voids and also specialist repairs. Whilst the DLO operates relatively successfully and there is no desire to move away from a direct delivery model, it does require the support of other externally outsourced contractors.

FFT's general experience of DLO's, is that they can be a successful way of delivering repairs and voids, but they struggle to pick up complex planned works and larger voids where there are various trades involved, as they commonly do not employ trades such as roofers, scaffolders, drainage operatives, etc. However, although a DLO may not be an option for a direct replacement for the current delivery arrangement in place, one could consider elements of it for the creation of a DLO model. *Our view here is that the cleaning services, including the estate warden function, and the creation of a minor repairs team, could be brought in house. We commonly see this in other local authorities as part of a mixed economy approach to delivery. Dacorum Borough Council for example operate an insourced DLO for cleaning services, yet outsource their responsive repairs and voids, planned maintenance and compliance services. We consider this would be worthy of further consideration for SBC.*

It is the opinion of FFT that a complete DLO, for the reasons of the cost to invest, the management and restructuring required, as well as the fact that it does not offer one solution in respect of service delivery, would not be the model to adopt for future delivery.

5.10 Joint Venture (JV)

The concept is a simple commercial arrangement between two separate bodies, in this case SBC and a contractor / service provider. Within the registered provider sector this delivery model had become more popular several years ago, but in the more recent times we have seen less Joint Ventures created. FFT were involved in the procurement of A2Dominion's original JVs, as well as the new JV that is currently being procured, which operates on a 70/30 split between A2Dominion and the two Contractor Partners. Another example of a JV is the partnership between Town and Country and Wates Living Space, which has recently been re-procured with Fortem. JVs are however more commonly formed to deliver new homes between housing providers and developers. The reason for the increase was due to the ability for it to utilise a collective pool of assets and resources, towards a common objective. Collectively through a joint venture company ("JV"), parties are able to attract additional finance and resources that would otherwise be unavailable. JVs are formed to procure and deliver services, invest in assets, strategically lead and manage a development project or provide a combination of these. The JV is intended to be.

profit making and the parties to it will take a pre-agreed percentage share. Likewise, the parties also share the risk and as such will take a pre-agreed percentage share of any loss or set up costs. It is usually the Client that will be the majority shareholder, and they will take the larger percentage profit share / risk. It is acceptable for a client to make a profit. The percentage shareholding profit ratio split will range usually between 51%:49% and 70%:30% depending on several complicated factors including tax advice and a benefits model.

A JV would be an option if SBC wished to combine its services within a single entity. It is a form of a single contractor solution. Whilst the advantage is that the council would have greater management control, this brings with it greater risk as it involves risk sharing. It is suitable where a jointly owned and managed business offers the best structure for the management and mitigation of risk and realisation of benefits whether they involve improved public sector services or revenue generation. It should not be seen as a delivery model in which the public sector seeks to transfer risk to the private sector through the creation of an arm's length relationship. For Clients it may be more likely to consider a JV for a specific development or regeneration opportunity rather than deliver landlord's statutory maintenance services, although A2Dominion and Town and Country have done this with a degree of success. A2Dominion are coming towards the end of their initial ten-year period and are looking to extend one JV for the optional additional five years. The other is being re-procured.

Whilst Clients can obviously benefit from the transfer of risk and day-to-day management obligations to a JV Co, they must also appreciate the consequent risks associated with creating such a delivery vehicle. These may involve potential personal liabilities for directors, the risk of insolvency, the inevitable time and costs involved in establishing companies and abiding by the regulatory provisions of the Companies Act. A number of issues must also be clarified before launching into such an arrangement including identifying funding to establish the JV, a client's ability and legal method for entering into the arrangement, the scope of the Client's involvement, and permitted activities and limits on the potential liability of the respective parties, as well as considering an exit strategy. Specific, specialist advice would be needed on the tax issues associated with a JV if this option is seriously considered. Setting up a JV requires a long lead in period, usually of a couple of years, to resolve the purpose and structure of the JV, find the right partner and get the necessary approvals. It also comes with considerable expense in terms of procurement support,

legal advice, tax advice and just as importantly the amount of internal resource that will need to be allocated to setting up a JV. There also needs to be a skill set within the Client organisation to be able to manage and operate a delivery model that includes profit share. In addition to the above points, to procure a JV arrangement, in our experience, will take at least two years to complete via a competitive dialogue procedure for the procurement itself. SBC do not have enough time available to undertake this, and from the perspective of FFT, we do not think it is an option worthy of detailed consideration, unless the current contract with OPSL was to be extended significantly.

5.11 Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS)

This is a subsidiary company, wholly owned by SBC that operates with the permission of the controlling entity, with or without direct input. Its purpose is to provide the contracting.

authority with the control over the means of delivery (to avoid contractor insolvency) by creating a labour agency, which provides VAT savings, and an external contractor will be appointed to manage delivery of services in return for a management fee usually around 25% of service value. As part of its role the contractor addresses material and equipment supply and the sourcing and management of sub-contractors. In principle, the more work that goes through the WOS the greater the saving. It places risk with SBC but does not have the profit-sharing advantages of a JV and does not provide the same incentives for the partner (with the service delivery experience) to drive efficiencies and value. It is similar to the In-House Capability but introduces external commercial management which should make the delivery more financially focused. A WOS is arguably the mid-point between a JV and a DLO.

A WOS would enable SBC to derive many of the benefits of an In-House Capability, such as control over labour, resources and service standards, but have the support of the contractor in key areas of Human Resource management and would enable one to develop their in-house expertise in this area in preparation for transition to a full In-House Capability.

A WOS can offer a vehicle to deliver the VAT savings on labour, as is the case for a JV however, it may be less attractive to the market due to its relatively rare use and therefore, may limit competition.

A WOS is likely to be of benefit if the Contracting Authority does not consider that they have the current skillset to manage the functions of an In-House Capability at the outset but do wish to leave their options open to deliver under an In-House Capability model over time. As with a JV, setting up a WOS requires a long lead in period, usually of a couple of years, to resolve the purpose and structure, find the right management partner and get the necessary approvals. It also comes with considerable expense in terms of procurement support, legal advice, tax advice and just as importantly the amount of internal resource that will need to be allocated to setting up a WOS. The other key consideration is that SBC.

would be responsible for the transfer of a considerable pool of staff from OPSL, with the added risk that if insufficient staff were to transfer then this problem becomes SBC's one. This risk comes with a notable health warning considering the current lack of resources and contractors potentially choosing to try and retain their staff, or at least their better staff. Whilst the right to transfer remains with the employees the potential risk needs to be highlighted. SBC would then have to lead on a significant recruitment process at a time when the market is struggling to appoint good trade operatives. FFT consider that the time available to re-procure does not

enable this approach to be considered, unless the OPSL contract was to be extended. Also as with a JV, at a time of financial constraint for local authorities, it is unlikely that this delivery model would be supported.

5.12 Mixed Economy

A mixed economy could be a combination of the various options considered above. For example, SBC may feel that a Single Contract to deliver the service across their entire stock portfolio may drive the efficiencies they are looking to achieve, but in order to de-risk the “all eggs in one basket approach” they may feel that having a Dynamic Purchasing System

set up to provide a framework of support Contractors / Specialists, who can deal with peaks in demand or periods of increased work in progress (W.I.P.), is a viable solution. This is just a single example of a mixed economy but gives SBC greater flexibility in terms of identifying a Hybrid solution. The pros and cons associated with each should be considered as set out under each option.

5.13 Price Models

5.14 Price Per Property / Price per Void / Basket Rates

With this model the contractor is paid a flat rate for each home in the contract, irrespective of the number of repairs in each home. There is usually a ceiling on value, with a list of works that fall outside the scope of the PPP arrangement. This passes risk to the contractor but also encourages them to fix first time to limit visits to any home. It also encourages them to keep to appointment times to gain access. The improved efficiency should benefit residents, drive up customer satisfaction and allow the Contracting Authority to focus resources on other key areas. However, the model also comes with its challenges around managing exclusions, dealing with variations, and providing adequate data to allow the market to price a PPP model. If the data is poor, then the market will price in the risk and a client can end up overpaying for its repairs and voids service. Furthermore, some PPP models were found to be inflexible during the COVID pandemic. PPP models operate on a wide range of parameters, including repair caps ranging from £250.00 up to £2,000.00. Depending on the level of the cap and what is excluded from the PPP, the costs of a PPP model can fluctuate from £250.00 up to £750.00 per property so it is very difficult to benchmark PPP models against one another, as there are so many variants that impact each model. Communal repairs are commonly excluded from a PPP model due to the ability to re-charge leaseholders.

Voids can be covered in a price per void (PPV) arrangement. This can either be a single price or price bands as described above. Whereas the PPP would give SBC an annual cost for repairs, the PPV does not set a specific annual cost as the total cost will be determined by the volume of voids presented, but an agreed monthly number can be set with a reconciliation process occurring every quarter to align expenditure with the actual number of voids delivered.

Basket rates are a common form of pricing mechanism for planned component replacement works and indeed the current contract operates in this way. It provides clear definition on price, against the specification. The issue sometimes is that the specification is not as comprehensive as it should be, with the result in leading to variations to the rates originally tendered.

With both the PPP and the PPV the provider may try to identify works as out of scope to get paid rather than have them covered by the fixed price. If the definition of out of scope is not clear this can result in significant debate over the marginal items. It can also see providers look to build works up to exceed a cap if the model is not set up to operate in the correct way. There are however mechanisms that can be put in place to reduce the impact of this. By way of example a contractor may only be paid the additional cost of works above the PPP and PPV cap. E.g., if the repair cost is £275.00, then a contractor is

only paid the £25.00 above the cap.

A PPP/PPV/Basket rate arrangement should significantly reduce client management as there is no debate on the cost of most repairs, or planned works falling within the solution. It should also provide greater certainty of costs against budget as most costs are fixed. The key to the success of this model is good data being provided to the market at tender stage, as the market will rely heavily on this to arrive at their PPP/PPV/Basket rate figure. Failure to provide good data will either result in the market pricing in a significant risk factor or conflict occurring when the provider is unable to deliver the Contract for the tendered rates.

The PPP model is a common means of delivery with a considerable number of Contracting Authorities electing to adopt this approach.

5.15 Schedule of Rates (SoR)

A pre priced SoR is a detailed, extensive list of repairs, by trade type, each with an indicative cost against it. The sector standard is the National Housing Federation SoR. Version 8.0 is the latest edition. Each item is allocated a code and cost to cover labour, materials, overheads, and profit. This usually includes travel to the works. Costs are either per item (tap / sink) or by size (linear metre, square metre, etc). Several codes may be used to undertake works.

When tendering, suppliers offer to undertake works with a standard variation to the SoR cost (plus or minus a given %). Over the past twelve to eighteen months we have seen minus adjustments become a thing of the past against version 7.2 of the NHF, which is based on 2016 prices in the main, as material and labour costs rise, and availability becomes more challenging. All codes used are then adjusted by this rate.

The SoR code rates combine labour and material costs. While it aims to be accurate, some rates offer the contractor a better return on costs than others. For example, painting costs

are usually considered to be poor. When pricing the contractor aims to get a balance between poor and good rates. This is partly based on expectations on the volumes of work in each trade area. If actual volumes differ this can impact on the profitability of the contract.

Some rates within the SoR will not cover the contractor's costs of undertaking the works whilst others are generous. The contractor will aim to use the code that gives the highest return for the works description and / or to apply more than one SoR code for each job as this will bring additional income therefore, robust contract management is essential.

The SoR used to order the works may often be different to the actual works required, resulting in the need to agree variations to the order request and value.

The advantages of an SoR solution is that it is well known and usually contractors and clients are used to operating it. It is a straightforward method of tendering that can be relatively simple to identify best value for. In principle it applies a specific, measured cost for each repair, so costs should reflect the actual extent and volume of works however, the volume of variations required can offset this. There should be minimal risk for the contractor as each repair order will be paid for. The contractor's tendered price may reflect the contractor's perception of the likely strength of client management and the contractor's ability to use the SoRs to recover costs.

SBC currently deliver aspects of repairs and voids using the NHF SoR model and as such it is already well known to you and your staff.

It should also be noted that the Schedule of Rates can be an unpriced rate book, whereby Contractors are asked to price each rate as they deem appropriate. This is practical where there are only a given number of rates opposed to the 3,000 plus rates against the NHF SoR's. The same principles apply to a pre-priced schedule and an unpriced schedule in terms of the way they are operated.

The disadvantage for clients is that contractors are usually better versed at operating a SoR system and can use the order description and codes to add works to increase their return on each job to ensure their costs are covered. Contracts can become confrontational as the two parties attempt to balance costs and return creating a lack of trust on both sides. Furthermore, the volumes of invoices and the management costs for both contractor and client make this an inefficient pricing and invoicing mechanism. It is however a very transparent way of identifying costs to be re-charged to leaseholders.

In terms of the current price point in the market, FFT have seen a notable change over the past twelve to eighteen months, with minus adjustments becoming far less common. Adjustments ranging from early single figure minus adjustments, such as -1 or 2% up to late single minus adjustments, such as -9 or 10% against version 7.2 of the NHF SoR's, are now replaced with mid-single figures, such as +4 or 5% up to low double-digit figures such as +10 or 12%.

5.16 Open Book

Open Book is designed to avoid the confrontational element of repairs contracts where the contractor is assumed to be attempting to use the payment mechanism to increase income and the client is trying to prevent this. The principal is that the contractor will be paid the actual cost of delivery, removing the risk. The cost of the service is based on labour, materials, overheads, and profits. At tender stage, the contractors set out their costs for each of these to deliver a predicted work volume. The client and contractor work in partnership to achieve service efficiencies as this will reduce the contractor's delivery costs and the resultant cost to the client. The Open Book solution assumes that the contractor will operate efficiently and achieve high operative productivity. Clear performance measures must be set and monitored to ensure that the contractor is delivering an efficient service. It is key to note that any Open Book or Cost-Plus model is the least risky option for a Contractor and is therefore commonly promoted by the contracting market.

The advantage should be that the actual cost reflects work volume and type. There is limited risk for the contractor and a competitive price should result. As costs of labour and

management are set at the start there should not need to be regular debate over cost. The discussion will focus on work volumes arising and the efficiency of the contractor's response, their deployment of resources and the ability to manage operative productivity.

The client and contractor should focus on the processes to improve the efficiency of both teams to get the most efficient solution for both client and contractor to minimise costs.

The common disadvantages associated with an Open Book model are those relating to value for money. As the client pays the cost that the provider pays, including a mark-up on materials or supply chain, the provider is not under the same commercial pressures they would be with a different price model. E.g., they know they will be reimbursed for the costs they incur so the desire to make commercial savings can be lost if not managed correctly. We have also seen traits whereby the provider is lazy and simply passes on the supply chain costs without checking and challenging them. An Open Book model can also be time consuming to manage and requires a good audit process to ensure it is being delivered correctly.

5.17 Average Job Value

To minimise the debate over job costs and use of the SoR, an average job cost is applied for all works irrespective of value. There is usually a ceiling applied so that the average cost applies to works with a value below the ceiling. Whether the work value is £20 or £120 the average value is applied.

This would enable SBC and the contractor to accurately assess contract costs as the work value at any point is the number of jobs issued multiplied by the average value. Invoices can be quickly processed. If there is an official order number, the actual value of works is not disputed.

The contractor will attempt to break repairs into constituent parts. A leak under a sink

which requires a repair to the waste and replacement of a damaged shelf is a single job with one average job payment although the contractor may try to claim it is two jobs and two job values. Alternatively, the contractor will try to identify works to take the repair over the ceiling value to recover the full cost. Mechanisms can be added to limit the impact of this approach whereby the contractor is only paid the additional cost and not the full cost.

There is a limited risk to the contractor if the offer / tender price is too low and there is a significant volume of jobs over the average rate but below the ceiling. Conversely the client has the opposite risk, a high volume of low value jobs. Both these risks can be overcome by monitoring actual costs and adjusting the average price periodically. This ensures neither party has significant risk, and the invoiced cost will reflect the cost of service delivery. The aim is ease invoicing and remove price conflict thereby making savings in management rather than to suppress costs. FFT have only come across this type of model on a couple of occasions over the last ten years, so it is not widely used and has probably been overshadowed by the more commonly used PPP model.

Like with the PPP model, the key to the success of an average job model is good data being provided to the market at tender stage, as the market will rely heavily on this to arrive at their average job cost figure. Failure to provide good data will either result in the market pricing in a

significant risk factor or conflict occurring when the provider is unable to deliver the Contract for the tendered rates.

Average values can be used for voids. It is not uncommon to have several void categories / price bands and assign work types and a cost, to each category. When assessing the void on day one, the void is assigned to a category based on the level of work required. While banding simplifies the process and will avoid debate on pricing for most voids, there will be voids on the cusp of bands which will require more detailed assessment.

The average job cost model is not as common as the PPP model, but like the PPP model the success of these Contracts will differ depending on how they were procured, what the data was like when they were procured and more importantly how well they were managed.

5.18 Agreed Maximum Price or Target Price (AMP)

This solution essentially hands responsibility for financial control of the repairs budget to the contractor. The contractor agrees to deliver the service within the Agreed Maximum Price or Target Price (AMP). Their responsibility is to manage repairs volumes and planned replacement items to deliver the required service level. This solution assumes that the contractor is the professional in delivering the service and is best placed to manage delivery. It places risk with the contractor but also most of the control mechanisms to be able to manage the risk. As with the PPP solution, it encourages the contractor to be efficient. There is usually an agreement within the AMP solution that if the contractor is able to achieve the efficiencies and make a saving this is shared with the client. The share need not be 50:50.

There is a list of repair / renewal categories that are covered by the AMP (or exclusions from it). There are usually very few omissions as the purpose is to get the full service. Again, this list sets the framework for delivery within the AMP. The contract price is therefore usually the client's repair and maintenance budget.

This solution could reduce SBC's management of day-to-day delivery and could allow them to focus on quality. The client needs to have regular and frequent information from the contractor on performance, volumes, and costs to ensure actual repairs align with the anticipated experience. Management usually focuses on the margins where actual repair requests and work types differ from expectations. It should also allow the client more resource to focus on the resident experience and satisfaction.

Payment should be simple with one twelfth of the total cost being paid each month on a single invoice, significantly reducing client management and processing costs.

The key risks with this model is that it places all the risk with the contractor but also most of the control mechanisms to be able to manage the risk. It is also reliant on the

Contractor looking to drive efficiencies and can create conflict if the Contractor reaches the AMP before the anniversary of the Contract. The client is likely to require a risk pot to deal with this situation as it is unlikely that a Contractor will continue to deliver a service if they have exceeded the AMP.

5.19 Price Inflation



It will be a factor of any re-procurement exercise for SBC to consider the potential increase in price from what is currently being paid for the service and to budget for it. This will be no matter what price model is adopted. More challenging is the fact that any such analysis will need to forecast for an April 2025 commencement. Positive seeds in construction are that we are now seeing the rate of inflation slowing, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for August now at 6.4% as an annual equivalent. The expectation is that by year end we will be closer to a 2% level. In considering the most common forms of pricing for the workstreams in consideration, these being Schedule of Rates and Composite pricing (PPP / Basket Rates) we provide the following points.

Schedule of rates (SoR) – The National Housing Federation has recently published its latest SoR's, now Version 8. These are different from version 7.2 as they no longer include access scaffolding as a part of the rate. They have also been updated in respect of new technologies, especially in decarbonisation and retrofit. Rate prices now reflect this, with some of them coming down where new materials (in 7.2) such as composite doors are now commonplace. However, the general view is that the SoR rates in version 8 are circa 6% higher than in version 7.2.

Composite Prices - Rates built up from individual component items will clearly be affected by inflation, as with the SoR's. What they have been affected by in the recent past is materials and labour shortages. We are seeing less of these issues now, but what will remain an issue is the risk pricing contractors will build into any pricing model they are given, and which is affected by the level of detail and data they are provided with. Price per Property (PPP) models can be especially affected in this way; with damp and mould if included as a repair item contributing to that risk price. We are currently seeing PPP rates of between £600 and £650 as a guide.

SBC need to give thought to the affordability of any new contract, and the control of risk through clearly defined client requirements and good data visibility is key to this.

6 Delivery Options not supported.

FFT were keen to ensure that all options were considered in full and as such one could argue that there are no unsupported options. However due to the poor performance of OPSL, there is a potential reluctance to extend the Contract to its full duration. Although this decision is not yet made and awaits a council cabinet decision in October 2023, it is unlikely that the current contract will extend beyond 01 December 2024 (Expiry Date). This therefore impacts the outcomes considered. With the end date less than 15 months away from the cabinet decision date, the programme becomes a key deliverable in terms of future options, in addition to performance currently experienced in a single provider model. As such the following would be difficult to procure and implement in the timescales

available, especially when considering the need to consult with leaseholders, which would add circa 3 months to the process. This, added to the key requirement to have at least three months of mobilisation on any repairs and maintenance contract means that there is little float in the programme. An indicative timeline is set out under section 10 of this report. This timeline is based on a two stage Restricted Procedure due to the relative complexities involved with procuring asset management contracts.

The following delivery options are not considered appropriate for SBC and their objectives when considering the organisation's aspirations, size, geographical spread, previous experience

with different forms of delivery models, and the time available to re-procure, should the existing contract not be extended beyond 01 December 2024.

Single Integrated contract / Re-procurement of existing contract– The single provider solution has not delivered quality to the standard expected by SBC.

Dynamic Purchasing System – This is not appropriate as a primary delivery model for the provision of repairs, voids and planned maintenance services.

Joint Procurement – SBC is of sufficient size to procure independently and does not need to seek a joint procurement to attract suitable contractors.

In house capability / DLO – The amount of investment required, as well as the time to bring a DLO into being, make it an unviable option within the time available to re-procure.

Joint Venture – The amount of investment required, as well as the time to bring a JV into being, make it an unviable option within the time available to re-procure.

Wholly Owned Subsidiary – The amount of investment required, as well as the time to bring a WOS into being, make it an unviable option within the time available to re-procure.

7 Routes to Market

There are a range of different routes to market, all of which offer advantages and disadvantages as set out in the table below.

The route selected will be dependent upon the timescales available for the procurement and the level of resource available internally to support the approach.

7.1.1 Procedure	7.1.2 Advantages	7.1.3 Disadvantages
Open	Single stage process which can save up to two months of time compared to a two-stage process	Difficult to establish a robust tender list
	A useful procedure if programme is compressed as is the quickest route to market	Tenderers to have complete both the SQ and ITT upfront which is not favoured by the market
		The evaluation process can be protracted and intensive for client as condensed timescale
		Unknown number of Tenderers may submit for the opportunity therefore difficult to plan for resources
Restricted	A two-stage process which enables the establishment of a robust tender list	Does not allow for any negotiation or dialogue with tenderers therefore any misunderstandings are may not

		become apparent until Contract Award.
	Reduces the number of tenders to be marked and evaluated	Price clarifications may be protracted as attempt to understand and resolve any pricing issues.
	Familiar to the market	Does not permit client to reduce numbers further and there is no final tender stage to allow potential errors to be corrected
	Client resourcing is spread over a longer time frame	Difficult to include site visits within a restricted process as will need to make them part of the evaluation process which is potentially open to challenge
Competitive Procedure with Negotiation	Follows Restricted Procedure but allows Client to Negotiate. Although Negotiation does not have to take place.	Adds circa 6 weeks to process beyond a restricted process.
	Chance to discuss IT interfaces, service delivery expectations and establish a "cultural fit" with the client	Can be resource heavy from client side, as adequate time has to be allocated to dialogue with each Tenderer.
	Allows the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings from either party prior to the issue of the final tender, therefore should reduce clarifications at BAFO.	Added cost to client and contractors, as need to set aside time and allocate resources to undertake the process
	Do not have to negotiate if satisfied with outcome following initial tender return.	
	Only need to negotiate with 3-4 tenderers	
	Can still undertake formal interviews following BAFO if deemed to be required	
	Site visits can be included as part of the negotiation stage but outside of formal evaluation	
Competitive Dialogue	Dialogue phase between initial tender and final tender stage	Adds circa 6 weeks to process beyond a restricted process.
	A useful procedure where works or services are of a complex nature and the client has not fully defined its requirements	Can be resource heavy from client side, as adequate time has to be allocated to dialogue with each Tenderer.
	The dialogue phase enables client to explore options	Added cost to client and contractors, as need to set aside

	available with those Tenderers selected	time and allocate resources to undertake the process
		Dialogue is likely to be too intense for works such as repairs, maintenance and improvement works

8 Timeline to implement a new arrangement

The indicative timeline to deliver and implement a new arrangement will differ depending on the preferred delivery model, but by way of indication FFT have set out the following timeline, which is based on the two stage Restricted Procedure for a traditional outsourced model.

- Sign off Options Appraisal – October 23
- Cabinet Decision (end contract) – December 23
- Issue Stage 1 Section 20 Notice – 10 December 23
- Issue P.I.N. – 10 December 23
- Publish Contract Notice – 01 April 24
- Issue Tender – 01 July 24
- Tender Return – 10 August 24
- Issue Tender Report – October 24
- Issue Stage 2 Section 20 Notice – 15 October 24
- Issue Final Feedback – 20 November 24
- Standstill expires – 01 December 24
- Contract preparation – December 24
- Mobilisation – 03 January 25 (12 weeks)
- Go Live – 1st April 2025

Critical to any major procurement exercise such as this one would be, is comprehensive stakeholder engagement, to secure support and input to the ultimate model adopted. The programme above, from the cabinet approval decision in October, provides up to four months for such engagement, which is positive.

9 Contract Options



There are a range of contracts available in the market which are summarised below:

National Housing Federation:

- Well known to the market
- Specific modules available according to the workstream
- Schedule of Rates Version 8.0 is current.
- Requires a reasonable amount of amending.

JCT MTC 2016:

- Well known to the industry and currently used by SBC.
- Can add partnering terms (as for SBC)
- Retention and damages not as standard.
- Can add special terms.
- Requires a considerable amount of amending.

TPC 2005 (Amended 2008 & 2013):

- Partnering approach
- Core Group, Problem Solving Hierarchy, etc.
- Retention and damages not as standard.
- Clause 15 - Add special terms.
- Requires a considerable amount of amending.

Term Alliancing Contract (TAC-1) and the Framework Alliancing Contract (FAC-1) 2016:

- Starting to replace TPC, but not yet widely used by the sector.
- An alliancing Contract that follows very similar principles to TPC
- It replaces Partnering with Alliancing to try and give it slightly more focus.
- Requires a considerable amount of amending.

New Engineering Contract (now simply NEC) 3 and NEC4:

- Various Options (A-F) which basically apportion the risk. A – Contractor, through to F – Client
- There is also a Term and Alliance Form of Contract
- Not widely used for the type of Contract/s SBC will be looking to procure.

Bespoke Contracts and Frameworks:

- Can be developed by the client to meet the specific requirements of the works and/or services to be delivered.
- Requires considerable legal time and expense.

Except for bespoke Contracts and Frameworks, whatever form is chosen it is likely to require amending to meet the specific requirements of SBC.

The options most suitable to SBC are likely to be the JCT MTC, TPC 2005 (amended) and TAC-1 due to the removal of the delivery models that are not supported.

It is worth noting that the current SBC contract operates under an amended JCT MTC 2011, with a strong focus in some areas on collaborative working.

10 Recommendations and Conclusions



10.1 Delivery Models and Pricing Mechanisms

The following delivery models have been discounted for the reasons set out in section 8 of this report:

- Extend the existing Contract with OPSL
- Single integrated contract (existing approach)
- Dynamic Purchasing System
- Joint Procurement
- In House Capability / DLO
- Joint Venture
- Wholly Owned Subsidiary

Having discounted the above options, FFT recommend that Slough Borough Council consider procuring a more traditional arrangement, based upon a number of multiple individual contracts. These would meet the key objectives and requirements of SBC, which include the points set out under section 6 of this report. In addition they offer more control in terms of contract management, being focussed on specific workstreams, and reduce the chance of contractor failure across all workstreams that one might experience with a single provider methodology. In addition, for the planned capital works FFT recommend the creation of a Framework, with individual Lotted workstreams, This will not only endorse control and management, but will also deliver more specialist and local providers. It would be recommended that an Alliancing Agreement was created which all individual contracting parties signed, to ensure collaboration, innovation and knowledge exchange. The Framework would operate using FAC-1 and individual contracts beneath that. The method of procurement advised is the Restricted Procedure, a two-stage process.

FFT see a potential split of the current contract into the following individual delivery models:

- Responsive repairs, void refurbishment services, part planned maintenance
- Cleaning services (or the option to create a DLO, see section 7.8)
- Compliance services, with separate contracts for
 - Heating management services (domestic and commercial), including renewables.
 - Water hygiene services and management
 - Lift management services
 - Specialist remedial works
 - Asbestos management services
- Capital Works framework, comprising individual Lots for:
 - Roofing
 - Windows & Doors
 - Cyclical Decorations
 - Structural Works
 - External Works & Drainage
 - Kitchens & Bathrooms
 - Retrofit / Carbon reduction

The proposed split enables building fabric to be considered by multiple contractors from a responsive and planned perspective, with secure management of the asset, and the ability to take a proactive approach to maintenance. It achieves an individual focus on key compliance services, with the use of specialists and reduces the opportunity for sub-contracting. In

separating cleaning services out, an FM function, it mirrors how the council is structured in terms of estates and property functions and offers the option for a DLO.

In terms of the price models, all the options set out under section 7 of this report could fit with the delivery models set out above, and we would expect to see a mix of NHF SOR's, basket rates and archetype pricing across all contracts. FFT do consider that thought should be given to a PPP/PPV option under the responsive repairs and voids contract when the approach is being developed.

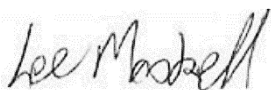
In terms of the Form of Contract, this will depend to an extent on the selected delivery model, but on the basis that the existing contract is an amended JCT MTC with collaborative principles, FFT recommend the change to a partnering / alliancing form of contract, such as TPC 2005 (amended) or the more recent Term Alliancing Contract, TAC-1. These would work well with all the contracts to be procured.

We also recommend bringing the currently contractor managed call centre back within the council.

It is considered essential that SBC test the model of delivery put forward above and thus it is recommended that a Soft Market Test event is undertaken with the market, via the issue of a Prior Information Notice (P.I.N.), in advance of the final decision to procure new services.

To provide SBC with an idea of the cost of a re-procurement exercise of the current contract, with the recommendations that have been made, *this being in multiple separate contracts, and a framework, this would be in the range of £150,000.00 to £180,000.00 (excluding VAT)*. There may be further costs for any legal support, as well as any costs for undertaking leaseholder consultation services. These costs equate to 1.00% of the first year's annual budget. A separate proposal indicating the services deliverables to be provided have been submitted to the Director of Housing.

Signed:



Lee Maskell
Equity Partner
For and on behalf of Faithorn Farrell Timms

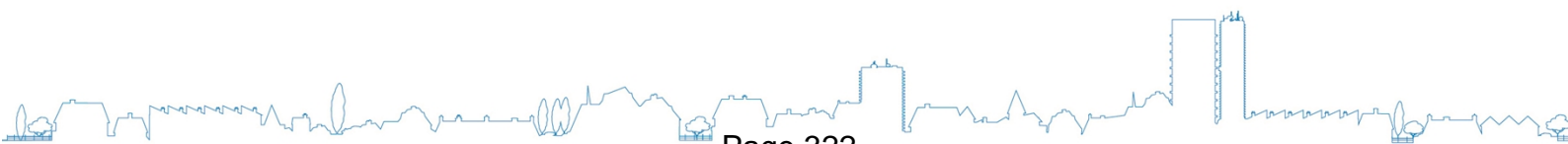
11 Appendix A – Advantages and Disadvantages

For clarity we have RAG rated the table below in terms of the following:

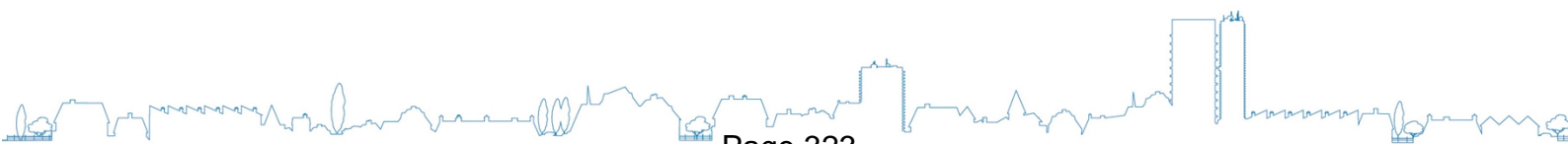
- Preferred and recommended model – Green
- An option, but not recommended – Amber
- Not an option for SBC – Red

Individual Contracts per area / work stream	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Allows greater flexibility and control Can provide increased competition once contracts are in place Allows smaller specialist firms to tender Known method of delivery Reduces main contractor on costs Reduces risk by not putting all eggs in one basket Access to service providers expertise Ability to utilise procurement consortia	Requires greater client coordination and staff resources Possible loss of response/ planned synergies Less attractive to some parts of the market place. Increased initial procurement costs (multiple exercises) Lower level of investment and innovation from contractors Potential complex TUPE transfer of staff Loss of efficiencies due to lack of scale Multiple IT systems in use
Single Integrated Contract	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Reinforces a lean client structure Single procurement process	All eggs are in one basket Limited client control Multiple layers of sub-contracting

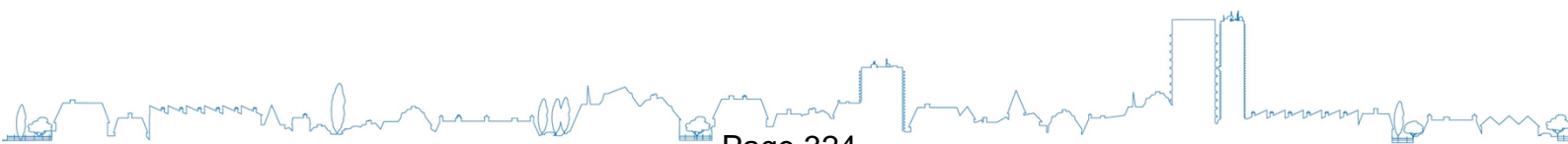
<p>TUPE transfer process is simplified Single point of contact More likely to encourage investment and innovation Single IT solution Allows smaller specialist firms to participate through the supply chain structure Ability to transfer risk Ability to create response/planned synergies Ability to offer employment and training opportunities for residents</p>	<p>Multiple layers of on-cost Profit focus One size fits all solution that assumes that a contractor can do all services equally well Will narrow the field of competition Lack of competition once awarded may lead to complacency Will exclude local contractors from competing Increased initial procurement costs Longer contract period required to realise efficiencies</p>
<p>Multiple Integrated Contract</p>	
<p>Advantages</p>	<p>Disadvantages</p>
<p>Avoids risk of single contractor solution Promotes a lean client structure Single procurement process with multiple appointments Option to benchmark internally and develop partnership working TUPE transfer process should be straight forward Reduces contracts to be managed Likely to encourage investment and innovation Allows smaller specialist firms to participate through the supply chain structure Ability to transfer risk Ability to create response/planned synergies Ability to offer employment and training opportunities for residents</p>	<p>Limited client control Multiple layers of sub-contracting Multiple layers of on-cost Assumes contractors can deliver range of all services equally well Will narrow the field of competition Will limit potential for small local contractors to tender Potentially several IT solutions to integrate Longer contract period required to realise efficiencies</p>
<p>DPS</p>	
<p>Advantages</p>	<p>Disadvantages</p>
<p>Can use an existing DPS such as Plentific Should give SBC good coverage to support one or more larger providers. Call for competition can be issued for specialists Help to deal with peaks and troughs Use to control creep in W.I.P Should encourage SME's with low overheads New contractors can join a DPS at any stage of its life, this gives SBC the</p>	<p>Can a DPS provide the customer with the customer experience they desire If procured direct a DPS can require a considerable amount of management. If using an established model there can be some high set up costs Who oversees Health and Safety and general compliance of those on the DPS. Does a DPS generate value for money if there is no steady flow of work.</p>



flexibility to add local contractors who are already known to them.	If procured direct by SBC, they will need to manage contractors who can apply to join the DPS at any stage.
Joint Procurement with other organisations	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Creating savings by achieving economies of scale, through joint management structures, letting of joint procurement contracts delivering aggregation of spend etc.</p> <p>Reduced duplication and overhead on contractor side</p> <p>More likely to encourage investment and innovation from contractors</p>	<p>Co-ordination between collaborative clients not straightforward possibly leading to a loss of local control and influence</p> <p>Incompatible services and stock type</p> <p>May limit competition in a complex coordinated procurement</p>
Creation of a DLO	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>VAT savings on labour costs</p> <p>Potential to create local employment opportunities</p> <p>Control and flexibility of workforce</p> <p>Easier to introduce service changes / innovation</p> <p>Above threshold procurement not required to set up the DLO</p> <p>Opportunity to sell the service</p> <p>Ability to reinvest surpluses to benefit of wider organisation</p> <p>Easier to provide employment, work experience opportunities</p>	<p>Investment required to set up</p> <p>Higher risk profile</p> <p>Long term investment required to realise efficiencies</p> <p>Fixed level of overhead regardless of work volumes</p> <p>Establishing a structured 'client' function to manage it</p> <p>Need fleet management and materials supply functions</p> <p>Market testing to prove value for money or provide competition</p> <p>Managing peaks and troughs of workload</p> <p>Need to tender sub contract services and supplies if above threshold</p> <p>TUPE transfer of staff and pension risk</p>
Mixed Economy	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Some savings on labour costs</p> <p>Reduced risk of single contractor / DLO solution</p> <p>Provides competition</p> <p>Provides internal/external comparison</p> <p>Provides options (via contractors) to access external services sole DLO solution does not</p> <p>Flexibility</p>	<p>Dilutes benefit of DLO</p> <p>Dilutes contract values and resultant economies</p> <p>Multiple solutions to manage</p> <p>Usually a contractor perception that DLO has favourable terms / work allocations</p> <p>Need to tender sub contract services and supplies</p> <p>Need to tender the remainder of the services and build in the possible in-house element</p> <p>Duplication of systems</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a transparent trading account Establishing a structured 'client' function to manage it Investment required to set up Client responsibility for risk TUPE transfer of staff and pension risk
Create a Joint Venture Company	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible local labour opportunities VAT savings on labour costs Potential control over service Opportunity to innovate Ability to reinvest surplus Can sell the service externally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex to implement Investment required Strategic direction influenced by a third party Commercial partner may focus more on the surplus rather than service Joint governance Reduces competition Difficult to exit TUPE transfer of staff and pension risk
Create a Wholly Owned Subsidiary	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially greater focus on customer service offered by provider with a single client focus. Potential to provide local employment opportunities Surpluses retained by WOS Transparency of financial performance High level of control VAT savings on labour costs Access service providers infrastructure, capability and supply chain Flexible for local employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment required to set up Higher risk profile for SBC Workforce employed by JV but managed by the contractor Contractor management style may not align with SBC's Market testing to prove value for money or provide competition Managing peaks and troughs of workload Need to tender sub contract services and supplies TUPE transfer of staff and pension risk Procurement more complex Model not fully tested but there has been some failure Difficult to exit



Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2023
Subject:	Procurement of Replacement Fleet Vehicles
Lead Member:	Councillor Kelly, Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment
Contact Officer:	Savio DeCruz AD Place Operations
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	A - Overall Life Cycle Costs of Second-hand purchase recommendation

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the preferred medium term options for the sourcing of essential vehicles for the Direct Service Organisation (DSO) to undertake grounds and highways maintenance, and street cleansing services. The recommendations detailed in this report ensures that the council obtains the very best value for money, within the financial package available, in sourcing specialist vehicles to enable the delivery of statutory services to the residents of Slough.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the procurement of a replacement fleet of vehicles for use within the Environment directorate in the following order of priority:
 - (i) outright purchase of second-hand vehicles capable of suitable adaptation and deemed available for a minimum of five years;
 - (ii) outright purchase of new vehicles deemed available for a minimum of five years;
 - (iii) procurement by lease for a maximum period of five years
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces, Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits and the Executive Director Finance & Commercial, the procurement and award of contract for acquisition of fleet vehicles in line with

recommendation a) and for procurement and award of contract for associated maintenance, ensuring value for money is secured when selected the most appropriate method;

- c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits, Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces and the Executive Director, Finance & Commercial, the procurement and award of contract for the Fleet Management Routing software system.
- d) Approve that the capital programme be amended to include acquisition of the DSO fleet with funding being from DfT grant and where possible specific programme grants to where possible preserve the more adaptable DfT grant funding for other critical purposes. The programme to be profiled across 2023/24 and 2024/25 as appropriate to available second hand vehicles balancing the need to come within revenue budget.

Reason:

- The council currently leases all of its vehicles used for grounds and highways maintenance and street cleansing. An Urgent Decision report was approved for a 12-month lease agreement on 30th October '23 to provide time for officers to seek medium term solutions for the procurement of vehicles to deliver savings as part of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and reduce the on-going revenue pressures within the service.
- Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure public spaces and highways are kept clean and free from litter and refuse as far as is reasonably practicable (as detailed in the Code of Practice on Litter & Refuse Nov 2006).
- To comply with the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the council provides a service that is responsible for the following operations, which require specialist vehicles:
 - Kerbside and trade waste collection services
 - Cleaning all streets, footways and open spaces that are in public ownership
 - Grounds maintenance of all public areas
 - Removal of fly-tipping
 - Collection of dead animals both domestic and wild

Commissioner Review

The commissioners are content with the recommendations in this report.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 Slough Borough Council has a statutory duty to collect and dispose of waste, to keep a predominantly litter free environment and to ensure that our roads are maintained to a safe standard. We are also committed to healthy lifestyles and part of this is to encourage the use of our parks and open spaces by keeping

them safe and well maintained. The teams that we have in place to deliver these services rely on the provision of suitable vehicles. A new approach now needs to be made for the continuation of service delivery and the financial stability of the council.

2.2 The proposed approach is to review all fleet following the Urgent Decision report, to determine the number of vehicles required and to then proceed with the incumbent and/or other market providers to seek and purchase second-hand vehicles to reduce the revenue leasing costs. This is a new approach for the DSO fleet but has been implemented within the council previously for the Community Transport service.

2.2 The council's Corporate Plan identifies three priorities:

- **A borough for children and young people to thrive** – having clean and safe environments for children and young people to live in and to play and exercise in is a key requirement for a child's development.
- **A town where residents can live healthier, safer, more independent lives** – feeling safe in a well maintained and clean environment encourages people to live more healthier and independent lives.
- **A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough.** Well kempt environments bring pride to communities and are attractive to visitors to Slough.

Options considered

OPTION	DESCRIPTION
(A) First Priority	<p>Purchase second-hand vehicles with the associated maintenance agreements for required fleet and associated routing software. This route to procure second-hand vehicles provides the council with a sound medium term plan with revenue savings to support the MTFs. A wrap around maintenance agreement will also ensure that the service has support to continue service delivery. To ensure on-going efficiencies and effective management of the fleet to secure a new routing software package to enable the service to better plan for future changes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Recommended</p>
(B) Second Priority	<p>Purchase new vehicles: The purchase cost of new vehicles is much higher for the council however, if the service is not able to source second-hand vehicles or lease the same vehicles at a competitive price it will need to allocate funds to secure new vehicles to ensure service delivery is maintained. The number of vehicles that may be affected by this scenario are small in number (3 to 4 vehicles)</p>
(C) Third Priority	<p>Continue to lease vehicles following the 12 month agreement with our new supplier – The service earlier in the year tendered and secure a five year option to lease vehicles. If the above options are not deliverable due to market conditions then the council can opt to go back to the 5 year lease arrangement. This does not provide short-medium term efficiencies and savings so will only be implemented if the above priorities are not implemented.</p>

Background

- 2.3 In April 2023 Cabinet approval was given to go out to the market to procure bespoke vehicles for use by the DSO. The tender returns for leasing and purchase were limited with only one supplier providing a cost for lease only.
- 2.4 The new supplier offered value for money on the lease fleet options but the revenue outlay for a full year would leave the service with significant pressures on the budget. As a result of the financial pressures and the need to provide efficiencies and savings, officers have negotiated with the new supplier, to provide a 12-month contract with options to purchase second-hand fleet.
- 2.5 The recommendation is based on the constraints of revenue and capital funding that the council faces, as revealed from the previous market testing and given the recent inflationary environment. The table below gives the total cost differences between the three priorities for procurement, without inflation and including the fleet management system, over a 5 year period at current values. It illustrates that to purchase second-hand provides better overall value in cash terms (and residual values to reinvest). Particularly given that leasing also significantly exceeds the revenue budgets (para 3.1.1 below) and as identified in the last report and has greater inflationary risk. While purchasing comes below the current revenue budget as the leased vehicles are replaced (see Appendix A).

Procure Vehicles by	Total Cost £	Rank
-		
Lease	2,701,854	2
Purchase New	3,505,553	3
Purchase 2nd Hand	2,644,226	1

- 2.6 The purchase of second-hand vehicles and installation costs of the IT system will be funded using DFT grant and ICT funding, so the cost falling on revenue budgets (if all vehicles are purchased) will be £1.3m, which is an average of £265k per annum over the 5 years and which is less than the annual budget of £365k. However, any underspends will initially be used to off-set the fact that for the first two financial years vehicles will at least in part need to be leased to maintain a service. The second-hand purchases require less capital outlay than buying new, which preserves limited available funding at this juncture and therefore the clear preference if the 2nd hand market retains value.
- 2.7 Officers over the next few weeks and months will commence the procurement and purchase programme for replacement vehicles and as part of this process will negotiate a maintenance agreement for specific vehicles. The Councils current maintenance agreement for the Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCV's) is with Denis Eagle and therefore some of the vehicles can be maintained at the Chalvey Depot.
- 2.8 Procurement for maintenance of other vehicles, namely the smaller vehicles, could be provided by Small Medium Enterprise (SME's) based in Slough which will help the local economy and reduce our overhead costs for travel and officer time. This will still need to meet the public procurement regulations and is an opportunity to obtain social value from Council contracts.

- 2.9 A Review of vehicles will start with the various services that utilise the fleet to ensure the correct number of vehicles are provided. This review will form part of the purchasing approach that the council adopts.
- 2.10 The service will manage both maintenance and leases within the current budget for leases of £365,500. As advised in the previous Urgent Decision report there is a pressure given the circumstances of the new lease. The overall estimated annual Maintenance and additional operating costs and modelling of the remaining lease costs as vehicles are replaced (see Appendix A), indicate that it is possible to bring spend in line with budget which is not possible under a lease arrangement. However, this will also depend on both the market conditions, the mix, age and type of vehicles and in regard to the level of maintenance risks. Officers are working on a profile of purchases, funding lease and maintenance estimates, to set against budget for the overall position (a model of these is provided in Appendix A). The Lead Member and the Executive Director will be briefed on these updates, though the clear intention is it needs to balance and provide value for money.
- 2.11 In parallel to the updating of the vehicle fleet, a review of the IT application to route waste collection has been undertaken.
- 2.12 It is recognised that the existing application is no longer fit for purpose. There are better and more flexible options available in the market. These applications offer a range of benefits to residents and service staff:

For residents:

- Improved online reporting for residents – a resident can submit a picture or a note identifying or requesting a service; and,
- Quicker and better responses to resident queries and requests.

For the service and staff:

- Better safe working practices and compliance – staff can carry out and record vehicle safety inspections through the application;
- Reduced operational costs – improved staff productivity, reduction in wasted journeys, reduction in poor routing, reduction in fuel costs;
- Automated job and route scheduling – work is appropriately packaged based on live routing information; and,
- Improved, more efficient management of resources – an example would be falsely reported bin collection, a resident would be unable to report a bin as missed if the bin was due to be uplifted that day and the collection route had not reached the bin yet.

- 2.13 The table below details the likely cost for the implementation and four year running of the IT application:

Budget Item	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Total
Annual licencing	50,800	50,800	50,800	50,800	203,200
Project costs	62,750				62,750
Total	113,550	50,800	50,800	50,800	265,950

- 2.14 Additionally costs to support the service aspects of implementation will be needed both backfill on training time, administrative and project support has been advised. This has been estimated to be c. £0.09m including training and a small contingency.

2.15 If purchasing vehicles, it becomes important to safeguard the assets and keep maintenance costs down by avoiding unnecessary wear and tear. Some of the benefits are given above that may help restrain other revenue costs. As these could be relatively small in value and difficult to track back to the software directly e.g. for instance fuel costs are so variable, these cash benefits of the software have not been factored in at this stage and will be picked up through budget monitoring and review post-implementation.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 The DSO currently has a revenue budget of £0.37m to cover the leasing costs of 37 vehicles in 2023/24, up to December 2024. The current cost based on the tender returns in May/June '23 would have left the service with a general fund pressure of around £0.08m per annum. Therefore, it was agreed that it is better value for money to purchase our own second hand vehicles and to meanwhile secure a 12 month lease to ensure services could continue.

3.1.2 Capital funds through the Dept for Transport (DfT) capital grant in 23/24 and 24/25 will be used to purchase the second hand vehicles including fleet management software at a cost of £1.2m with an estimated vehicle resale value of £0.25m. This will be a net cost of £0.97m.

3.1.3 The second-hand fleet market is very buoyant and as a result the vehicles are not always available, therefore funding over a 2-year period will allow a flexible approach and avoid the need to purchase vehicles that do not present value for money.

3.1.5 The model provided in Appendix A suggests a revenue cost of £1.3m (excluding remaining lease time) over 5 years against a budget of £1.8m. The initial underspend will be used to pay the leasing costs, required meanwhile, to maintain a service, while the vehicles are being purchased.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Council has statutory duties in relation to waste collection and street cleansing. Where these services are delivered in-house, it is necessary for the Council to procure vehicles to facilitate these services. The Council is required to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and its own contract procedure rules in relation to the procurement of vehicles, whether such purchase is outright or via a leasing arrangement and in relation to the procurement of a new software system.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1

Risk	Assessment of risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Loss of continuity of service if vehicles cannot be replaced within given timescales	Medium Vehicles could be hired but specialist vehicles tend to be built to order and are not available to hire	Explore hiring options or extend current contract	Medium
The current preferred supplier for leased vehicles withdraws current offer in whole or part.	Medium Unlikely in current financial climate	Negotiate with incumbent provider for continued service	Low
Costs exceed estimated financial envelope	High Current market is volatile and demand significantly exceeds supply leading to long lead in times. Specialist vehicles are manufactured to order	Look at purchasing second hand vehicles to bring costs down and to access supply	Medium

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 All new diesel-powered vehicles will have a Euro 6 diesel engine, which meets the ultra-low emissions standard to drive to London and other ULEZ areas.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 There are no direct equality impact implications arising from this report.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 Cabinet agreed in April 2023 to go out to the competitive market to procure essential vehicles for DSO service delivery using national frameworks. Only one completed bid was submitted relating to a 5-year lease period for all required vehicles.

3.6.2 The council's intention to formally award the contract to the preferred supplier, recommended by Cabinet in July 2023 has been re-negotiated following an Urgent Decision report and the new supplier has now agreed to provide fleet for a 12-month period.

3.6.3 Second-hand vehicles and maintenance agreements will be reviewed through the procurement team to determine the best route and the most financially advantageous option for the council.

3.6.4 For the purchase of the IT application, the application will be procured from a Crown Commercial Service's framework agreement – G-cloud 13 RM1557.13. The procurement will follow the standard call-off procedures for the framework.

3.6.5 The contract would be for a period of four years and include – implementation of the application, installation of the devices into vehicle cabs, staff training and annual licencing.

3.6.6 The contract would be scalable to allow additional vehicles of be added as required during the contract duration.

3.7 *Workforce implications*

3.7.1 There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

3.8 *Property implications*

3.8.1 There are no property implications arising from this report.

4. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix A

Overall Life Cycle Costs of Second-hand purchase recommendation

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Lifecycle Total
Revenue	£	£	£	£	£		£
Totals of leases ongoing	327,886	187,719					515,606
Totals for Maintenance & Operating Cost*	5,546	110,571	232,519	237,169	241,913	246,751	1,074,469
Fleet management software licence		50,800	50,800	50,800	50,800	50,800	254,000
Total Revenue Costs	333,432	349,091	283,319	287,969	292,713	297,551	1,844,074
Total Revenue Budget	365,500	365,500	365,501	365,502	365,503	365,503	2,193,009
Indicative revenue position	(32,068)	(16,409)	(82,182)	(77,533)	(72,790)	(67,952)	(280,983)
Capital							
Purchases and Sale	197,998	874,995				(254,626)	818,367
Grant funding	(197,998)	(874,995)					(1,072,993)
Software implementation Costs	15,688	137,063					152,750
Software implementation Funding	(15,688)	(137,063)					(152,750)
Residual values on sale reinvestment - c/fwd						254,626	254,626
Capital Balance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net cash outflows/(inflows)	<u>547,118</u>	<u>1,361,148</u>	<u>283,319</u>	<u>287,969</u>	<u>292,713</u>	<u>297,551</u>	<u>3,069,817</u>
This cycles -External funded "inflows"	<u>(197,998)</u>	<u>(874,995)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(1,072,993)</u>

*those relevant to change from Lease to Purchase.

Appendix A - Further notes

1. The costings and budget position shown are based on modelling assumptions (see further below). It is for 36 vehicles (one from the current fleet dropping out). Purchasing would be on a phased timing of purchase and depending on what is in the second hand market. The underspends shown therefore may vary considerably in reality due to different costs and timings in practice and might be unwise to assume at this stage for 2024/25. The lifecycle provides a clear proof that purchasing brings the revenue costs into alignment to the budget and with some head room and allowing for funding the software licence needed to work the fleet to best advantage. There may be some small reduction in existing software licences and legacy use which is related to this but is not shown as marginal cost.
2. Additionally, if no second-hand vehicles (given value for money, market and condition issues) were available then it may be necessary to purchase new or continue leasing longer than planned for that vehicle or type. This will change the position in that new vehicles would need to be purchased, subject to available funds, the lifecycle changes in that more grant to fund the higher cost will be required. Which will need to be held in contingency until this is clear. For new vehicles the residual value could run beyond the 5 years indicated for second hand vehicles or just under double the value of second hand vehicles at the 5 year point. Maintenance would be less in the first 3 years approximately and further early on will be covered in part by warranties. However, none of these aspects are enough to overcome the serious resource constraint in funding the purchase in the first place that the council faces.
3. The software implementation is shown for now under capital however its possible substantive amounts will be revenue based. Funding can be substituted in to release general fund as necessary if this were the case (see Financial implications and DfT grant information elsewhere). This is shown over 5 years licencing to align with the vehicles lifecycle and is shown as fixed price (though originally envisaged for 4 years contract).
4. Assumptions in the model include
 - i. Even purchasing over the periods involved for the vehicles and used to calculate lease ongoing and lease drop out points and the maintenance costs.
 - ii. Current price estimates have been used. The second hand market may or may not reflect the assumptions used. It will be a matter of balancing cost on individual vehicles with what the council can afford.
 - iii. There is some flex in funding for purchase of vehicles to allow for changes in costs
 - iv. However a key overriding assumption (fundamental principle) given the council's position is that key grants and funds must be carefully used to ensure funds are there for helping balance the council's budget position.

- v. Purchases are assumed to flow evenly over the periods involved and overall average at the mid-point of the period e.g. in the last 3 months of this years vehicles will start working mid Feb being halfway of the last quarter. Actual purchasing patterns will differ of course.
- vi. Maintenance and Operating costs for simplicity are assumed to spread evenly over the financial year and to inflate in line with Bank of England and OBR assumptions over the period. Obviously, timing of vehicle purchases informs this and the actual timing of maintenance cost will vary in practice. The maintenance is based on appropriate costings for second hand vehicles at baseline current prices, however there is a risk this may differ (for good or bad) in practice, given they will be second hand vehicles. Inflation has been allowed for cumulatively on maintenance costs starting 2024/25 and onwards broadly in line with government forecasts of 5%, 3% and 2% thereafter and allowing slightly for higher inflation in maintenance than general inflation.
- vii. Lease costs fall out upon purchase there is no overlap costs included.

5. This clearly proves with some headroom created in revenue based on these assumptions and that the recommended course achieves the desired level of revenue cost reduction from the original lease options the council faced.
6. Given timeframes the only alternative would be to continue leases. These will cost more than the existing revenue budget as discussed in the last paper and so is not recommended and given the results of this model. For simplicity the whole life costing assumes that all vehicles are sold at the end of the 5 year period at the same time and replaced. . Given that the market may shift and as the next 15 months of purchases progress vehicle age may get older or the market more expensive - so this is not an unreasonable and slightly more cautious assumption than assuming 5 years from date of purchase.
7. The main DfT grant used to fund the non-operating expenditure as per the life cycle table above, is a government capital grant which has facility to also pick up revenue costs in specific areas of activity. Therefore, if some activity on revenue (such as the IT project) does not meet the grant then it would be possible to use the grant to release general fund that would otherwise be allocated elsewhere. It is further hoped to manage the impact on this grant by part funding some vehicles via specific project grants that they will work on.
8. The residual value receipt will need to be reinvested in similar assets and shown as a c/fwd in the table. If not, then it would be possible the value would need to be refunded back to the grant awarding body.

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